The Bond of Aura

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Ch. 17: A Christmas. As December arrives, Lucario experiences the thrills of the most joyous of times, though not without its share of personal growth…

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The Bond of Aura

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A Fateful Event

Hello, people who scroll fiction after fiction to encounter something entertaining like a TV show or stuff like that. Since I'm a Lucario fanatic, and the fact that I found out I had a hidden passion for writing, I decided to hit the world of fiction (namely here) and start my own series.

A long time ago, this story was written. However, the story itself looked a bit too simple for my tastes. The characters only had few dialogues, and the story advanced too fast. I was very inexperienced back then, but I've learned a lot over the years.

So now, I'll bring you this re-written version of this story to increase the number of fan fictions depicting Lucario.

In this particular fan fiction, ***there will be neither the Pokémon World nor a setting in the anime.*** *In fact, I'm taking a big risk and relate the real world with the video game world. Yes, that's right. That means that there will be the only OC I need for this story to bloom properly. This OC will be my only OC, so you don't have to worry about seeing a story crammed with pathetic OCs. You only get one so the character development remains sane.*

One more thing before you scroll down the page. Since this will involve the real world, expect a lot of realism to take role in all chapters. There will be many different instances where the OC will react as anyone would or at least something very close along those lines. I've seen some fictions about the real world "merging" with the real world, and there's not enough realism with the reactions characters make. I said, "screw it" and gave it a go with this. I hope I did a good job with it, though.

Oh, also, this is a random Lucario. But will this Lucario be random or does he have a story to tell?

In any case, I welcome all of you to this new revision of my original main fic.

I encourage all Lucario fans to read and review.

Chapter 1: A Fateful Event

Seriously, why do I have to be so unfortunate? It's such a drag to take care of myself in these conditions…

Hi, guy or girl listening to the little but annoying rant. My name is Chris… I don't like to mention my full name because it's a bit weird itself, so please, bear that with me. You're probably wondering why I'm even ranting to myself, right? Well, if you're so considerate, please, listen to my story.

I'm a fifteen year-old teenager living in the pacific city of Los Angeles, California, a somewhat rich teenager at that. Before you think I'm a little rich kid, let me tell you that you might be right. Unfortunately, I'm one of those weird kind of people who don't mind having all the money of the world because it's still boring to them. And no, I'm not selfish either. I assure you that I'm very clean and honest myself. In fact, I rarely even think too much about what to get for myself.

Why am I even rich, you ask? Well, it's a really hard way to be rich, but this is like this because my parents are expert business people. They both are very talented, helping some important corporations out there. They get large sums of money, but that's something I could care less.

Don't label me as insane, though. Many people think money buys happiness, but they're dead wrong. It just helps you to live an easier life, nothing else, nothing more. While money is resourceful, people; family, friends, and relatives are more invaluable if you ask me. In my case, several key-factors just make my life a very… very unfortunate one…

One, despite I have parents, they're not always home. In fact, they're the kind of people who travel around working all the time.

Two, my parents left me ever since I graduated from kindergarten. This may sound crazy, leaving a guy like me to fend off by myself, but they didn't leave because they had to, but it was because of something I did… Something I don't really want to recall anymore… I constantly worry about them, but they're always okay. Maybe I'm a bit paranoid.

Three, even though I'm alone, I've been raised to what I am today by my caring uncles. All my uncles live here in this city, and they were asked by my parents to look after me. That was ONE serious help right there to me. I could've been pretty dead, but it was easier for me to "stay alive" all this time. My uncles are the best for that reason.

Too bad my uncles aren't raising me anymore. Now that I graduated from Junior High School, I proved them that I could live by myself. At first, I thought I was about to implode, but all the things my uncles taught me until now helped me to live by myself in my big house of the neighborhood. I'm used to invite some friends to spend the time together and play video games.

And this is the main point: video games.

For as long as I can remember, video games were my only way to have fun for myself (and my friends), and they keep being my only way to have fun until these days. Thanks to the monthly checks my parents always sent me to pay the electricity and water, there were always big leftovers so I could use them to get anything I wanted, and all that money was mostly spent on video games.

Thanks to growing up playing video games, I became a little bit too hyperactive. With every video game that came to my room, there was a new world in them where you could explore freely without getting yourself killed on the bed. I think I didn't mention this before, but I'm the kind of gamers that appreciate video games' plots and

characters. The wonderful plots and marvelous characters are just a remarkable sight for my eyes to behold.

It was this same thought that made me think that… fantasy could be real.

It is childish, but everyone has a childish thought. I'm old enough to be thinking that stuff, but I don't care much about age restrictions. I love fantasy, and I believe that it's real in some way or another. It's my strongest belief that I hide from everyone else. It's my only resource for me to imagine a life where I could experience new thrills, visit new lands, and meet astonishing people…

I'm really stupid, though. No such places exist in this world, and maybe even in other faraway planets. Reality was something very cruel to me, but it's okay. As long as there's imagination, I can enjoy my life.

… Except tonight, since it's the start of Summer Vacations and it's already raining heavy. Worse yet, I'm alone in my room without anybody else. I really, REALLY hate to live for myself. It's a very scary thought for me to live alone without your parents. If I just could have somebody, anybody (sane, that is), to stay with me… maybe I could enjoy my solitary confinement in my own house.

My bad luck just couldn't bother me anymore than tonight…

Inside a room of a house, there was a fifteen-year-old teen preparing to go to sleep. The short black-haired teenager was about 5'3". His skin was dark, even though it looked light brown. He wore white shorts with a white shirt that he used to go to sleep. Taking off his shirt always felt very uncomfortable, so he always wore it all nights, having spare pairs in his closet. His eyes were brown, and his black hair had some hair sticking out on the upper left side corner of his head, giving him a distinguishable look for his hairstyle.

The night raged with a fierce rain, as Chris was already lying down on his bed, covering himself with the bed sheets. The teen wasn't

afraid of this kind of weather although he was alone in his house. He was used to sleep late at night when he watched some movies or played video games. It was the season of the year where anybody could have fun and stay up very late.

"This rain bothers me a lot…" Chris muttered. "During times like this, a good video game always helps me relax… Let's see," he said, looking around to spot the clock in his room.

The room was big. Chris's bed leaned against the wall, where the door idly stood on the lower right end of the bed. To his right, Chris saw the plasma TV sitting on top of some drawers. To the lower left corner of the room, a pile of video game magazines were piled up next to another pile of video game cases. Several posters, depicting several famous Nintendo characters, were hanging around the walls. Right next to the TV, a Wii idly sat, its yellow light shining a bit to distinguish itself from the darkness of the room.

Then, Chris found his clock behind the TV. Thanks to a lightning, it illuminated the room long enough for him to tell it was 11:18 PM. He blinked and looked next to the bed where a drawer was. Over the drawer, his DS lied down on it. He smiled a bit and took the console where he opened it up and started playing. "I have my Diamond version inserted," Chris said. "I was doing some training in Route 224, I think… Oh, I was right."

The teen checked his current team. He was mostly training his team to get new evolutions that weren't registered in his Pokédex. He had a Sunflora, an Arcanine, a Swampert (which was level 100), a Luxray, and a Swellow. He mostly used Swampert to get experience and share it with the others through an Exp. Share item.

"I guess I'm done with this team…" Chris muttered, before spotting his sixth Pokémon. "Huh? That's weird… I forgot I had him there."

There was a level 33 Lucario, whose health was red. It also had a Burn condition status. In the arsenal of the Aura Pokémon's moves,

it knew the moves Swords Dance, Bone Rush, Force Palm, and Counter.

"Now that I remember, I think I was training this Lucario so it could learn Aura Sphere," Chris said. "It was such a bad idea to make it fight a Rapidash. It used Flamethrower on him, and he got a critical hit, together with the Burn… Good thing he beat it, though."

The teen yawned and closed his DS, leaving it where Lucario's status screen was. Chris put the DS back on top of the drawer and opened his window a bit so the fresh air could enter. It was a good thing that there was a hanging roof outside, covering his window from being assaulted by the rain. He made a mental note to take care of his Lucario once he woke up the next day.

"I'm up to play the game some more tomorrow… I feel so tired today…" Chris muttered. "That graduation party I had with some friends today tired me out… Bummer, and here I wanted to play for a little while longer…" He covered his neck and sank his head into his pillow. "Oh well, time to rest…" With another yawn, the teen fell asleep.

The rain outside made a lot of noise, but Chris wanted to pay that price for the fresh air to sweep his room. His annoyance was further bothered once crashing sounds of thunderbolts were shining in the clouds.

Chris shivered a bit and sneezed. "(At times like this, I'd like to have someone here with me… I'm a bit scared of this rain when it gets so bad…)" He shook his head and sank into the bed sheets. "(I'm old enough to be scared of this rain, please… It's not like the rain will hurt me or something. I'll just leave the window open and rest for now. I'm so tired…)" he whined in his mind.

Just then, for his dismay, the thunders began to get noisier than before. Chris grunted angrily and opened his weary eyes. With some anger, he glanced up at the window.

"God, would it kill me to ask Mother Nature to keep it down for once?" he asked sarcastically. "I'm trying to start my vacations with a nice sleep, you know…"

The thunders became noisier than before.

Chris widened his eyes. "O-okay, it's getting noisier now. T-the forecast didn't say there was going to be a thunderstorm… Then again, forecasts are wrong most of the tim-"

And to his greatest shock, the clouds replied by shooting a lightning bolt right through his open window. The teen yelped and covered his face with his bed sheet. Through his bed sheet, he saw the room illuminating for a long while. He shook in fear, wishing that the lightning bolt didn't hit anything in his room to make it explode or something. After yelling "HOLY CRAP! and nearly having a heart attack, Chris pushed his bed sheet away and sat up, looking fairly shocked to his room. In a blink of an eye, his forehead sweated bullets. He breathed in and out to calm himself.

"T-the hell?" Chris yelled. "W-was I going to get killed tonight so I couldn't get to High School or what?" he asked out of panic.

His panting came to a halt as he found out that there was an ominous blue glow illuminating his room. Chris sat still, his eyes shaking in fear. As far as he knew, there weren't weird glows in his room before.

"(D-don't panic… d-don't panic…)" Chris thought, trying to calm himself down. "(Y-you're still alive… y-you're still alive… Y-you must calm down before you scream…)" He inhaled a big amount of air and exhaled all of it down. Failing to stop sweating and keeping his heart from beating so fast, Chris slowly turned to the direction of the blue glow to see what was glowing close to his bed. "… DUAAAAAAAAAAH!" he screamed.

The lightning bolt had apparently landed right next on his drawer, right on top of his natural blue DS. The soot that the bolt caused

surrounded the DS, which was somehow glowing in a weird light that made Chris shake in fear.

"(T-that stupid lightning bolt landed right NEXT to me and it didn't blow my brains out?)" Chris thought in panic, before focusing on his glowing DS. "(B-but… t-then… i-it landed right on my DS? W-why is it glowing like that? Oooooh my god, it's going to explode!)" He sank back into his bed sheet and cowered in fear, waiting for his DS to explode.

Several seconds passed, and the teen slowly stopped shaking under his bed sheet. There was no explosion coming from his DS. Gulping at this, he peeked out his eyes to glance at the DS.

"… N-nothing?" Chris muttered to himself, seeing his DS glowing still. "I-I thought it was going to explode or something… b-but why is it still glowing like that?" He put his bed sheet away and carefully stared at the glowing console. "… Should I really go ahead and touch it? What if it explodes right after I touch it or explodes right before? Oh god, why, oh why do I have to get into this dilemma?" he asked in disbelief. "I nearly avoided getting myself killed by a lightning bolt, but now I have to deal with my glowing DS…"

Chris looked at his DS.

"… I don't want to leave it glowing like that all night," he said. "… I have to arm myself with whatever piece of courage I have left in me and… t-touch it to see if it's okay…" Chris gulped at the thought and put up a serious expression. "I-if I die… it'll be my fault… Well… h-here it goes…"

Carefully, Chris moved his right hand towards the glowing DS. He gulped and sweated more as it neared on top of the console. Once it stood over it, Chris's hand moved down, making sure that it didn't touch the DS right away. When it was roughly five centimeters away, Chris closed his eyes and, in a much slower pace, placed his hand on the console.

When his hand touched the DS, Chris bolted right away into his bed sheet. He shook in fear, thinking the DS already exploded. But nothing happened, and he pulled down the bed sheet, looking doubtful at the glowing machine. "…" He, quickly, grabbed the DS with his hand and pulled it to him. Now that he knew the DS wouldn't explode after touching, his confidence was coming back to him. He looked down upon the console, his expression turning serious once more. "W-well… n-nothing happened, so everything's fine… for now…"

The thought about opening his DS suddenly came to him. Chris just noticed that the glow was coming from within the console's screens. The glow was so ominous to him that a chill ran down his spine. He gulped again and slowly opened his DS, staring at two blue glows occupying both the touch screen and the upper screen. "…" He backed away his head and shrugged. "T-this doesn't really look so good to me…"

He lowered his face a bit and thought something.

"(I-I don't know, but this DS maybe… just maybe… saved my life,)" Chris said. "(Did it absorb the lightning bolt… or did it act as a lightning rod? Whatever the case was… I'm still scared about this light… Hmm… I wonder what could happen if I touch the touch screen…)" He stared at the glowing touch screen. "(Would it make the system explode for real?)" he thought scared. "(E-even so, I can't have this DS glowing all night. I wouldn't sleep well…)" Chris looked at his open window and closed it. He sat back and removed the stylus from the DS.

The teen stared at his stylus, being spared of destruction or glow effects caused by the lightning bolt. He slowly looked back and forth between the touch screen and the stylus. He gritted his teeth cautiously and moved the stylus over the touch screen.

He tapped the touch screen lightly.

The glowing lights suddenly dimmed down until they disappeared.

The teen didn't believe what he saw, but his DS returned to normal. He carefully looked back to his screens, both turned off. "Phew…" he sighed, "nothing bad happened… And here I was thinking it was going to blow up…" With his regained confidence, he placed the DS back on top of his soot-covered drawer. He just remembered that he had the game turned on, specifically right on Lucario's status screen. "Oh well," he said. "I didn't get so far to save the game. I just checked my team's condition. At least nothing got lost over this stupid lightning bolt…" he cursed and sank back to his pillow. "So much for my first day of vacations…"

Just as he was about to close his eyes, his blue DS suddenly glowed even brighter than before. The teen began screaming loudly, sitting back up to see the console once again shining like crazy.

Chris knew he spoke too soon.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAHH, IT'S GOING TO EXPLODE!" he yelped.

Perhaps the most shocking thing that made Chris lean to his wall and grab the area where his beating heart was under his chest was the fact that all the light was concentrating itself on the upper screen. Before he knew, all light materialized in the form of a beam that bounced all over his room, miraculously not breaking anything. The teen screamed louder and took cover under his bed sheet, as the light beam whizzed right next to him. It bounced crazily around the room, not finding some way to shoot itself outside the area.

"W-what's going on?" Chris asked scared. "S-stop it!" he demanded to the light bouncing along his walls.

The light escaping through the bed sheet suddenly dimmed down, and Chris felt that something bounced off from his bed. He carefully pushed the bed sheet off from him and glanced around in fear. The bouncing light had somehow disappeared from sight. There weren't holes in the wall or window where the light could have escaped.

At last, the room was all silent and calm, just as he wanted it to be.

He panted a bit too heavily and wiped his forehead to sweep his sweat. "W-what was that?" he asked in the form of a whisper. "I-is this some kind of dream or what?" he asked in a panic. He knocked his head a bit and felt some pain. "I-it's not a dream…" he muttered with a gulp.

Chris glanced back to his DS, which now was turned off without the spooky glowing light. He didn't know it this was okay, since the console shone brightly right after it dimmed down. He waited a bit for something to happen, but he sighed in relief after everything came back to normal.

Chris was finally at peace.

"First, a lightning bolt almost kills me… Then, my DS shines… Then, my DS shoots a freaky light that ALMOST kills me… And now, everything's so calm," Chris muttered. "I'm seriously unlucky…" He lied down on his bed and covered himself with the bed sheet. He shifted his eyes around and sighed, hearing the calm sound of the rain outside his house. "There… everything's okay now. The panic finished, so I'm all good to go to sleep this time." He smiled a bit and yawned. "What I'd give for a good night sleep… Well… now I can sleep…"

Before he could drift away to sleep, Chris turned his head to the left, facing the wall.

"…" He slightly opened his eyes and saw some kind of sphere object sitting idly on his pillow, just right in front of his face. Since it was too close, he saw a blur. "Where did this ball come from?" he asked, grabbing the ball.

When a lightning illuminated the room, his expression turned shocked when he saw a very familiar object under his hand. The object had a red base with a white base, divided by a black line where a button was situated between the red and white bases. The design, even though simple, made Chris's heart skip a beat.

It was a Poké Ball. One that looked extremely genuine and real.

"… A-a… a-a… a-a… a-a… Poké Ball…" Chris whispered heavily. "T-there… t-there… there… there is a… a… a… a Poké Ball… in… in… in front of me…" His hand slowly rubbed the sphere. Instead of a cheap imitation of plastic, he felt the object's metal far too real. It felt very real to the point it was not a fake. "… It's real…" he muttered, his eyes fixed on the sphere.

Out of panic, Chris sat up on his bed and stared at the sphere, his heart beating madly. He never thought it was real, but the sphere was definitely a real Poké Ball. He knew it wasn't a cheap plastic imitation that some restaurants used to distribute to children. He also knew that he never had one to begin with, and the Poké Ball before him was the first one that made its way to him… somehow.

"(Calm down… calm down, Chris… So what if there's a Poké Ball that appeared out of nowhere in your room…)" he asked mentally, "(I-it's not like it's going to open and reveal an empty space of air… will it? But… how did it get here in the first place? That light just now didn't materialize this, right? Or… did it really do that?)"

Many doubts crossed in his mind as he stared down at the sphere. Chris decided to grab the Poké Ball, trying to inspect it closer. He rubbed it a bit more, and it sure felt real to him. It wasn't a fake, but a real Poké Ball.

"(Just as I thought… This is… a real Poké Ball…)" Chris thought. "(… But to see if this is real, maybe there's some Pokémon insid-)"

The teen's mind suddenly came to a halt after thinking about a creature trapped inside the sphere over his hands.

"(… Why did I never think of this before?)" Chris thought. "(If this is a real Poké Ball, then there must be a Pokémon trapped inside… I can open this the same way the characters do, right? But then, if there's a Pokémon… will it obey me or something? It'll surely attack me out of fear! What if it's a big Pokémon that ends up destroying my room

and escaped to destroy the city, or what if it's a Legendary Pokémon instead?)"

Chris looked at the ball.

"(Please, don't let it be a Legendary Pokémon!)"

The teen then thought about something very important. It was something that he hadn't thought about after thinking what Pokémon could be inside the sphere.

"(… Wait, I don't really need to open this, do I?)" Chris thought to himself. "(Of course not… I don't have any reason to open this. If there's a Pokémon inside, it'll have to stay in there so it doesn't hurt me.)" He sighed in relief and placed the Poké Ball on his drawer. "I'm so stupid, thinking that I needed to open it. I'm far too smart for my curiosity to take the better of me." He sighed and, once again, hit his head against the pillow to go to sleep. "I had too many panic moments tonight, and I'm sick of them. I want to have a peaceful sleep…" He yawned and slowly went back to sleep, facing the wall, not minding that the Poké Ball rolled down his drawer to the floor and opened by itself.

Chris's fears came back to laugh at his scared expression. His eyes widened as he saw a light shining behind his back. He cursed mentally for leaving the ball on a place where it could easily roll down to the floor. However, his thoughts soon died as the light vanished. The light itself was proof enough that a Pokémon was inside the Poké Ball.

And whoever it was, Chris was in for trouble. Another thunder illuminated the room, and the shadow of a tall figure was shown against the wall Chris faced. The figure was very tall, managing to tower over Chris even if he stood up. He noticed some two horns on the shadow's head that made him think it was a demon. "M-MONSTER!"

This mere shadow made Chris scream once more. But then, the shadow slowly faded back into darkness, and somebody fell down on the floor.

Thinking he had to see his assailant before he could die, Chris sat up from his bed and looked around his room, finding no one else. "W-where are you?" he asked quickly. "I-I know there's a Pokémon in this room! S-show yourself and kill me off if you want! I don't want to live getting scared every freaking second after I go to sleep!"

" **Grrrrrrrrrrrrrr…** "

The low toned grunt that came from the floor made Chris think that a huge monster was about to rise up and eat him whole. He didn't want to look, but his eyes gave up on his thought and slowly looked down to the floor.

Miraculously, Chris avoided screaming after seeing a Pokémon dropped dead on the floor. The Pokémon lying down on the mattress had two paw-like feet and long black legs, a weird blue-shaped thigh, a long blue tail with a scythe-like end, a black belt that was actually skin, a thin body covered in yellow fur, and two black wheel-like shoulders where long blue arms with black paw-like hands and spikes on the wrists. The head of the Pokémon loosely resembled the ancient Egyptian guardian named Anubis, except for the fact that its face had some kind of black pattern that crossed over his fierce red eyes and long snout, crossing between his long ears. The most distinguishable features of the Pokémon were the four black sack-like appendages hanging on the back of its head. Judging by its grunts, the creature was surely a male.

"… T-that isn't a… Lucario… is it?" Chris muttered under his breath, staring scared at the Lucario on the floor.

For some reason, the Lucario lying on his floor didn't look like it was going to attack or even stand up. In fact, the only thing the supposedly tamed Lucario did was grunt silently as if it was in some kind of pain that Chris didn't know. The teen was very scared of the

Lucario. The Aura Pokémon looked extremely real to him like the Poké Ball. "Grrrrrrr… Grrrrrrrr…" the Lucario grunted, its eyes tightly shut.

"T-this is way too much for me already," Chris complained. "Really, all these weird chain of events are WAY too hard for me to believe even if they DID take place before my own eyes…" He gulped and stared down at the Lucario. "… Er…"

Something was wrong about the Lucario. It wasn't the fact that it seemed to be in pain, but it was the shocking fact that, unlike all Lucario depicted in the games, it was a bit too big. Chris's took a closer look, managing to stand on the floor to look down at the grunting creature. Chris examined the Lucario from feet to head.

"… Is it just me… or is this Lucario… way too big?" he asked to himself. "And on top of that… this one is even bigger than me… I thought they were around four feet, b-but this one… I think it surpasses six feet!"

"Grrrrrrrrrr…"

Chris took several steps back, yelping in doing so. He thought he made the Lucario angry for talking, but the creature didn't reply with an attack or something. It just remained there still on the floor, grunting and grunting. Chris gulped at this and looked away in fear. "W-what am I supposed to do now?" he asked to himself. "I-I'm so scared! T-there's a Lucario lying down on my floor, a-and I'm here freaking out too much! W-what do I do now?"

And to get him more freaked out, a voice replied to his questions.

" **S-somebody… please… help me…** "

Chris gritted his teeth in fear and swallowed his breath. He blinked and turned around to look down at the Lucario. He thought he heard things, but a voice definitely came from the Lucario. The voice made

Chris sweat even more. "(D-did… d-did this Lucario just talk to me? D-does it know how to talk through telepathy?)"

"H-help me…"

It couldn't be true.

Chris could have sworn seeing the Lucario's lips moving in synch with the voice. His breath became fasted as Chris shook his head in bewilderment. "D-did you just talk?" he whispered in fear. "(H-he talked, I-I know it talked through its mouth and not his mind!)"

"I… I beg you…" the Lucario pleaded, even though it didn't take a first look to Chris. "P-please, whoever you are… I need… to recover… I… I feel… so weak…"

"(S-should I respond… o-or should I leave it there so it dies?)" Chris thought in panic before he looked down sadly. "(… If I help it… will it kill me… or will it leave?… Either way, I feel guilty somehow… Seeing it… seeing he like this on the floor, panting like that… It's just wrong to leave him like that…)" He closed his eyes and thought hardly. "(I don't know what I'll do, but… he needs help… badly…)"

Another, final thought crossed Chris's mind.

"(… Whatever happens next will be my fault… but… I know I'll do the right thing if I help him out,)" he thought and looked serious at the Lucario. His look suddenly looked worried as he approached the Aura Pokémon, where Chris sat down on his legs and moved up his hands over his sides. He looked from feet to head at Lucario, seeing where he was hurt. "O-okay, hang in there," Chris tried to reassure the weakened Lucario, trying to avoid screaming. "I-I'm here to help you, b-but you need to promise me not to attack me no matter what happens. D-don't worry, I won't do something bad to hurt you. Y-you have my trust."

"Grrrrrrrrrr…"

Chris gulped, trying to avoid submitting himself to fear after the Lucario grunted in pain. He caught a small glimpse of the Aura Pokémon's sharp, hard fangs. "A-are you listening to me? I-if you want to heal, l-let me see what you're suffering from. I-I'll do my best to heal you…" The teen sniffed sadly, thinking that the Lucario could be acting to kill him off when he lowered down his guard. "J-just… t-trust me… I-I'm… I-I'm so scared… b-but… I-I'm not a bad person…"

"… I won't hurt you…"

The teen gasped at this reply and looked at the Lucario. "S-seriously? Y-you won't hurt me?"

"I… I won't…" the Lucario replied. "I… I just want to recover… So please… help me… I beg of you…"

"… R-right away!" Chris said nodding, his confidence coming back to him. He looked at Lucario's body, but there weren't any signs of bruises. "This is strange…" Chris thought worried. "You d-don't look hurt anywhere… but maybe you hurt your stomach so badly or something?"

"I feel… some pain…" replied the Lucario. "I… I just need to rest… a-and I'll be fine… B-but… I feel a burning feeling on my forehead…"

"Burning feeling?" Chris said confused. He gulped again and slowly touched the Lucario's forehead. After confirming that the creature was real, Chris felt some very hot on the Lucario's forehead. "G-goodness, you have fever… a-and a very bad one…" He pulled back his hand and stood back up. "T-treating high fevers should be the same as treating normal fevers on Pokémon like humans, right? I-I'll be back in a second with a wet towel!" He ran to his door and opened it. Before running to the bathroom, he turned to take another glance at the Lucario, panting heavily on the floor. "H-hang in there while I come back!" he said before running away.

Several seconds later, the worried teen ran back into the room, holding a wet towel on his right hand. When he looked down at the

Lucario, he thought that it was a bad idea for it to rest on the floor. Chris shook his head in panic and looked to his bed.

"I-I need to put you on my bed so you can rest," Chris said. "C-can you stand up?"

"I… I can't…" the Lucario said.

"(Just my luck… JUST my luck…)" Chris complained mentally. "T-then I'll have to carry you there!" he said as he tossed the wet towel aside and knelt down to pick up the Lucario with both hands.

Unfortunately, Chris never took his time to check that the average Lucario weighted far more than the average teenager did. Furthermore, since the Lucario he was treating was bigger, it was a very impossible task to lift him up the floor. The teen struggled, but he couldn't even budge the Lucario's body a little. After several tries that ended in failure, Chris stood back up and began panicking.

"I-I can't carry you to my bed. Y-you're way too heavy!" Chris said. "I need to find another way to carry you, but with what?"

He suddenly gasped and turned to the Poké Ball lying next to the Lucario.

"… The Poké Ball…" Chris muttered. "Maybe I could call you back and then call you out on my bed… That should do it…" He went to pick up. Doubtful that it could work for him, Chris pointed the sphere towards Lucario, the button sticking out to face him. "L-Lucario, return, please!" Chris yelled.

It maybe was a miracle, but the Poké Ball obeyed the teen. A red light shot to Lucario's body so it could turn into a big red frame. The red frame then shot back into the sphere, taking Lucario along with it. Chris gasped at this and stared at the Poké Ball for a brief moment. He shook his head and forgot pondering about the sphere listening to his order. Chris turned to his bed, and for the first time, called out the Aura Pokémon's name.

"Lucario, come on out!" Chris shouted, raising the Poké Ball to the bed.

The sphere opened up, and it shot a light that materialized above the bed. In a blink of an eye, the weak Lucario was now lying down on the bed with his head on top of the pillow. He panted heavily, which made Chris snap out of his state. The teen quickly picked the wet towel and placed it gently over the Aura Pokémon's forehead. "G-grrr…" the Lucario grunted.

"…" Chris shook his head, seeing that the Pokémon seemed to be a lot in pain. "I don't know… I feel that the towel won't cure your high fever that easily… Should I resort to medicines, then? (Furthermore, will… will they work on Pokémon? What if they end up killing him off?)"

"Grrr…" the Lucario grunted more.

"… It's… worth a shot," Chris muttered. "I'm risking his life a bit, but I have no other choice to cure him… Lucario, are you listening to me?"

"… Yes…" the Lucario replied faintly.

"G-good," Chris said, wishing that the Aura Pokémon didn't listen to him when he said he was risking the creature's life. "I'm going to bring you some medicine so you can heal faster. I-I don't know if it'll work, but it's possible that it could heal you."

"Please… do it…"

"Y-yes!" Chris said nodding before he ran out of the room and went to get medicine for fevers.

A minute later, the teen came back, carrying a spoon and a small container with medicine to remove fevers. Chris grabbed a nearby chair from the corner of the room and sat down next to the bed. He gulped at the sight of the Lucario before he poured some pink liquid

over the spoon. Once it was bordering the edge a bit, Chris turned to look at Lucario. "Grr…" the Lucario grunted more.

"L-listen," Chris said. "I need you to open your mouth so I can give you the medicine. I-if you want to get over that fever, p-please, swallow the medicine."

"W-will it… heal me?" the Lucario asked weakly.

"(Think positively… think positively…)" Chris thought. "Y-yes, it has to work on you, so please, open your mouth and drink it."

For Chris's surprise, the Lucario slowly opened his mouth wide enough for a spoon to drop anything in it.

"Here it goes…" Chris muttered, slowly moving the spoon into the Aura Pokémon's mouth. He slowly dripped the liquid into Lucario's mouth until the medicine was emptied out from the spoon. The teen gasped after the Lucario coughed a bit, but he then stopped coughing and calmed down. "… D-did it work?"

"…" The Lucario stopped grunting and sighed. It seemed that he had fallen asleep after he drank the medicine.

"Whew…" Chris sighed and placed the spoon back on the drawer with the medicine. He looked back at Lucario. "You're not… dead… a-are you? The medicine didn't kill you or anything, right?" Chris asked, noticing that Lucario's chest was inhaling and exhaling air. "… Looks like you're not dead… I-I'm… I'm glad…"

Everything seemed to be calming down as the Lucario peacefully rested without causing havoc. As the rain kept pouring down the neighborhood, Chris stared at the Lucario for a long while, letting his body rest on the bed.

"…" Chris shook his head and looked up at the ceiling. "I must be insane… but there is a Lucario right in front of my eyes…" he muttered to himself. "How… how in the name of my parents did this

happen? This is so strange… so strange that I can hardly believe it's really happening…" He pressed his brow and frowned to himself. "(This is definitely happening… but… I can't believe it that easily…)"

The teen looked at the Aura Pokémon resting on his bed.

"… I need to calm down a bit… and try to think what made all this happen…" Chris muttered. He sighed long enough to exhale a lot of air. "That didn't help much… but it might be enough… Okay, let's see," he began, "one thing that's been bothering me is why this Lucario came badly hurt with that fever…" He looked at his DS on the drawer. He then stared at the Poké Ball he had placed beside it. "This Lucario came out from that Poké Ball, which presumably came out from the DS. Now, the reason behind the Poké Ball's appearance was that… my DS was shot by a lightning bolt… I can easily assume that the lightning bolt triggered all this."

Chris started having a small headache to think about the unlikely event, but he continued.

"However… a lightning bolt causing all this is impossible," Chris muttered in deep thought. "It could easily have destroyed by DS with a single blow, but it didn't. I heard things are destroyed by thunders, but this is ridiculous. DS systems aren't lightning-proof or something…" He glanced back at the Lucario. "Maybe… there was a small chance that something else was at work behind the scene… I can't put my finger on what that was, though. It's impossible for me to find out that by myself… and I don't think this Lucario knows either…

The teen suddenly came back to think about the Pokémon.

"That theory aside, I need to find out why was this Lucario in such a bad condition… Of course…" he muttered, looking worried at his DS. "This Lucario was badly hurt with a high fever. If I recall… I had a Lucario at low health with a Burn condition… If I put these two together, then maybe I can assume that… Oh no…"

Chris hastily grabbed his DS and turned on the system, which made him sigh in relief to think about buying another DS. The game cartridge was spared of being broken, giving him the chance to play his Pokémon Diamond version. He quickly booted the game and went all the way to check his party's conditions.

And sure enough, the spot where his badly hurt Lucario once occupied was empty. His sixth Pokémon was gone from the team for unknown reasons.

"… Then… I remember leaving the Lucario's status screen without turning off the game," Chris muttered. "And since this Lucario is gone from my party… then… t-then…" he looked back at the Lucario on his bed, "t-then… it is… no… h-he… he's the Lucario of my team…"

Chris kept staring at the Lucario. Closing down his DS, the teen put the console on the drawer and placed his hands to his sides. He frowned at the occurrences he experienced over the past minutes, wanting to believe it was all a dream. But the dream was in fact real. A wounded Lucario of his team made it to him through a lightning bolt crashing on his DS without obliterating it.

"…" Chris closed his eyes and sighed. "So now what do I do with him? Should I take care of him while he's like this? He could end up attacking or eating me once I turn my back… A-after all, I know very well he could beat me up and make me his slave. Ack, what am I thinking? I'm thinking so many possibilities, and yet… he doesn't seem to do any of those…" The teen stared more at the Lucario. "… One thing I know for sure is that I could die tomorrow by him… Just because I've seen Pokémon acting docile around people doesn't mean they all are the same. This Lucario… No…" He shook his head. "Lucario should be loyal Pokémon to their trainers. They shouldn't cause any harm, but I think they got quite the temper if they're angered…"

One last thought crossed the teen's mind.

"… Loyal to their trainers…" Chris looked at the Poké Ball on his desk. "… I wonder if I became his trainer just because I have that here… I'm very stupid if I think he's my Pokémon. He would kill me if he found out that…" He groaned a bit. "I-I need to stop thinking. I'm starting to have a headache. I should just go back to sleep for now and…" he gulped and looked back at the Aura Pokémon, "… a-and… stay close to him so he doesn't escape. I-I know I'm weak compared to him, but… I should just sleep on this chair…" He stood back up and went to his closet to get a new bed sheet. He sat back on the chair and covered himself with the bed sheet.

When Chris took another glance at the Lucario, the teen sighed and drifted off to sleep on his chair. He wished that things tomorrow turned out fine. Having a Lucario could be very risky for his welfare, but Chris, still unsure, had to look after him. There was a small chance that the Aura Pokémon would listen to him.

As the rain poured down outside, a few minutes later, Lucario grunted and slowly opened his crimson eyes. He glanced around, seeing some blurs. The only object he could focus long enough to get a perfect view was the teen sitting next to the bed, sleeping soundly on the chair. The Lucario blinked a bit and felt that his fever was slowly disappearing.

"(Who… who is he?)" the Lucario thought, staring at the teen. "(He was the one who treated me, right?)" He glanced around more. "(And… where am I? Where is my trainer?)" He grunted mentally and rested his head on the pillow. "(I need to rest more before I can go anywhere… For now… I'll lay low.)" He turned back to the teen. The Lucario's vision then became clearer as he saw his Poké Ball on the drawer. His eyes widened before looking at the teen. "(Why is my Poké Ball with this kid? Did he steal it from my trainer?)" He glared menacingly at Chris. "(If he stole it from my trainer, he shall suffer the consequences for his foolish act of kidnapping me right no-)"

Before the Lucario could opt for a way to attack the sleeping teen, he noticed that Chris was talking in his sleep. Lucario's ears were strong enough to listen to some small whimpers coming from the

teen himself. From what he could tell from the whimpers, Lucario heard Chris saying, "P-please… j-just… d-don't… d-don't hurt me… I-I'm s-so afraid… I-I'm very, very… a-afraid of you…"

Lucario's glare slowly faded into a blank look.

"I… I… I wish you're okay… J-just… please… d-don't hurt me… I beg of y-you… Please…" Chris's whimpers suddenly stopped as he drifted off to sleep.

"…" The Lucario looked at the ceiling while resting his head on the soft pillow. He looked back at Chris and blinked at him. "(This is impossible…)" Lucario thought. "(If he was thief, he should be asking for ransom or threatening my trainer… but he instead is wishing me to be okay…)" He grunted a bit until he got an idea. "(I should see his aura to see if it's bad or not, and then, I'll see what his mind has stored for me… I wonder if he is good…)"

The Lucario's eyes glowed yellow while his entire body was shrouded in a blue aura, trying to examine the teen's aura. The Lucario's sixth sense resonated as he inspected the teen's aura, which was a strong blue aura. Besides sensing auras, the Lucario had the innate ability to read minds. It could be assumed that his aura was strong enough to enable him the power to read minds.

The Lucario's strong aura faded as his eyes turned back to normal. He nodded to himself and closed his eyes. "(This kid has a rather strong aura… and I didn't find any evil intentions within his aura. His mind is very clear with positive thoughts, and some of them were about me recovering… and some were about wishing that I didn't kill him… He's scared of me,)" the Lucario resumed. "(He's scared that I could end up hurting him despite he treated my fever…)" He looked a bit worried at this. "(If I attacked him just now, it'd be an act of disrespect of my part after he went through all the trouble… I shouldn't resort to violence if he doesn't want to do anything bad to me.)"

He grunted in pain and lied down quietly on the bed. The Lucario was feeling better, but it wasn't enough for him to stand up.

"(…)" The Lucario thought one last time before going to sleep, "(I'll rest for the time being… and see what I can find out from this kid tomorrow. Hopefully, I won't end up scaring him…)"

The worried teen and the worried Pokémon were now sleeping in peace, one wishing for things to be okay, and the other wishing to find out about his whereabouts.

Around 9:00 AM, the next morning came with sunlight passing through the window. When it hit the teen's face, Chris woke up with a long yawn. He grumbled a bit and opened his weary eyes, staring at the wall across his bed. "Sleeping while sitting on a chair isn't really my style…" he complained. "This is what I get when somebody seemingly dangerous is resting of my bed… Of course, something like that SHOULDN'T happen," he said, rolling his eyes. He sighed and looked back to his bed…

It was empty.

"…" Chris had such a bad luck. He began sweating right waking up. He couldn't forget anything that happened yesterday. He thought that there was absolutely no way that everything was a dream or a nightmare. He looked back at the drawer where the soot that the lightning bolt left was still there. For his dismay, the Poké Ball was still there. If it was still there, it was obvious that the Lucario was on the bed last night.

And since the bed was empty, there was a good chance that the Lucario had fully recovered.

And if the Lucario had fully recovered, then it meant that he was somewhere around. The Lucario could get away with anything and beat Chris as the teen was thinking out of panic.

"… C-calm down, dammit," Chris muttered to himself, his eyes darting around his spot without moving his head. "There's a Lucario roaming about my house, waiting for the right time to get me and kill me. H-he had spikes on his wrists, right? H-he could use them to smack them against my head and kill me in a really bloody way. I-I hate to see a lot of blood, e-even if it's my own blood!"

The teen gulped many times until he was at a reasonable level that could be defined as calm.

"B-bring yourself together," Chris encouraged himself. "H-he has no right to beat me after I gave him medicine and MY bed to rest, n-not to mention I stayed with him so he was fine!" He stood back up and stared at the wall. "I-I'll go find him in my house. He couldn't have gone out! If he did, it'd cause a big uproar and the police could take him away to a laboratory to do freaky experiments until he dies! I-I'm not letting him go through all that… I have to find him!"

Chris turned around and met face-to-face with a spike chest in front of him. Upon looking up, he turned pale, staring at two crimson eyes staring down at him.

The Lucario was listening to him all this time, standing right behind the chair. The Aura Pokémon crossed his arms and stared down at the silent teen.

"So it was you who looked after me, correct?" the Lucario asked.

"…" Chris thought that the Lucario was glaring down at him, but he knew very well that Lucario always had a strong, sharp look. Unfortunately, he couldn't tell if they looked like that all the time or they were really glaring at anyone and anything. Maybe they hated the world. Chris had a small hunch that they glared for real if their red eyes looked far sharper than usual.

"Would you answer me before you keep staring at me with that look?" the Lucario asked.

Chris promptly screamed and jumped back to his bed, taking cover under his bed sheets. The Lucario was shocked at this reaction and held out his hand towards Chris. "D-don't hurt me! Please, don't hurt me, I beg you!" Chris yelled.

"Don't panic!" the Lucario yelled. "I-I'm not going to hurt you, I promise you that!"

"H-how do I know you're not lying to me?" Chris asked under the bed sheets.

"I hate to lie!" the Lucario replied. "Trust me, please! Just listen and I won't do anything rash!"

Chris whimpered a bit in fear and uncovered his head, looking worried (and shyly) to the Lucario. The teen sniffed a bit and looked a bit doubtful. "… A-are… are you sure you're not going to hurt me?" he asked scared.

The Lucario shook his head and looked away. "No… I won't…"

The teen wished he could trust the Aura Pokémon more.

So that's the end of chapter one. The first version was very simple and didn't have much description, but this one seems to be good enough for me. There might be a possibility that future chapters won't be the same as the first version, and there could be brand new chapters as well. However, I just hope here that this fiction was of your enjoyment.

For now, if you would like to do so, wish me good luck to keep writing this. I want to have the fresh start I wanted to have ever since I became a writer for this site.

I encourage all Pokémon fanatics to review.

A Fateful Encounter

I'm happy to know some old and new people like this story so far. This chapter was previously released and corrected in the original one as it is right now, but there are some changes to fit with the previous chapter's flow.

I encourage aura specialists to read on, enjoy, and review. :D

Chapter 2: A Fateful Encounter

The teen gulped once more, seeing the aura wielder's concerned look fixed on his face. Even if it was simple enough, the Lucario's worried look helped Chris to feel a bit secure. "…" Chris looked away, eyeing the Lucario by looking at him from the side. The teen's right eye twitched as he asked, "W-what do you want from me?"

The Lucario shook his head. "I don't want anything from you," he said.

"W-why were you standing right behind me all this time without saying anything?"

"Before you woke up, I got off from your bed earlier," the Lucario said. "When I looked around, I was confused of my whereabouts. And when I walked behind you, you suddenly woke up. I was about to say something until you started talking to yourself."

"… T-true enough," Chris muttered.

"… You were the one who looked after me, right?" the Lucario asked.

"Y-yes, sadly," Chris said.

"Why sadly?"

"B-because I'm really scared of you, that's why," Chris admitted, shaking in fear. "D-do you really think that it's so common to see a REAL Pokémon around these parts? Y-you're wrong if you think that."

The Lucario looked confused. "This… isn't Route 224?" he asked.

Chris kept staring at the Lucario.

The Lucario looked around the room. He found several magazines pilled up over one another on a corner, and there was a big, flat TV behind him and in front of the bed. He looked to his left where the window showed a street outside where other houses were extending to each side, and then he looked to his right where a closet was. "… Where am I now?" he asked. "Last time I recall… I was training in Route 224…"

"(Route 224?)" Chris thought. "(S-so then… does he know that he was there with the character I chose to play in that game?)"

"Do you know?" the Lucario asked.

Chris snapped out from his thoughts. "O-oh, um, well, this is not Route 224…" he trailed off in thought. "Y-you're standing inside my room of my house, in Los Angeles, California…"

"… Los Angeles?" the Lucario repeated. "What's Los Angeles?"

"L-Los Angeles is a big city where many people live, including me," Chris said.

"Does this place have Pokémon besides me?" the Lucario asked.

Chris looked away, worried about the Lucario's reaction. "Well… no… There aren't any Pokémon living in here… or any other part of the world…" He looked at the Lucario. "I-I told you that it wasn't common to see real Pokémon here."

"What?" the Lucario asked with some shock. "H-how is that possible? Did all Pokémon disappear completely from here?"

"N-no!" Chris said, looking back at the seemingly tall Lucario. "You don't understand anything. There hasn't been any Pokémon living in this world until you came here somehow…"

Chris stared at the Lucario's face. It looked as if his red eyes were completely still in place, not moving an inch. He looked down at the floor. "… That… sounds unbelievable to me…"

The teen gulped. "S-so what are you going to do now?" he asked, oblivious of the fact he was being serious. "I-I already told you that you're the only real Pokémon in this world."

The Lucario stared back at Chris. "Then… how did I end up in this world?"

The dreaded question made Chris's stomach hurl so much that he would puke at any moment. He was scared of telling the Lucario the truth about his fateful arrival. "… I'm sorry, but…" Chris muttered, trailing off at a loss of words.

"Yes?" the Lucario asked.

"(I can see what he'll do with me,)" Chris thought in panic. "(Once I tell him that he came out of a video game, he'll deny it and shoot me with a glare that'll possibly be even more terrifying than his current look! B-but I need to tell him otherwise!)"

"…" The Lucario looked worried at Chris. "… Can you… tell me?"

Chris swallowed his breath as his lips trembled. "I-in truth… you're just a creature from a video game…"

"… A what from a what?" the Lucario asked.

"(… Oh no, what did I just do?)" Chris asked. "(Now I'll have to explain what I meant by that, and he looks kind of about to

breakdown with all these revelations… but… I hate to lie to people… and… what could he do to me if he were to get angry?)"

The Lucario looked a bit serious, but he was still a bit careful. "What do you mean I came from a video game? That sounds very… unbelievable…"

"… I-it's true…" Chris said before he walked reached out for his DS sitting on the charred drawer. He grabbed it and showed it to the Lucario. "You… came out from a video game inserted into this DS…"

The Lucario examined the small console. "… That looks like some sort of Pokédex to me."

"A… what?"

"It's not a Pokédex?" the Lucario asked. "I remember my trainer used this to examine every new Pokémon we encountered together…"

"(His trainer? He means the character I use,)" Chris thought. "(He seems to be very loyal to his trainer… even though it's just a computer-controlled character…) N-no, this isn't one of those. This one is just a mere console where you can play video games… and you're part of one of them…"

"…" the Lucario looked away. "… I… see…"

The teen couldn't believe an important factor. The Aura Pokémon didn't seem to react violently towards the truth about the real world and the video game fact. Chris thought that the Lucario was one of those Pokémon who didn't like to get fooled around, even thought Chris wasn't fooling around at all. "… What is it with you?" Chris asked confused.

The Lucario looked at Chris. "W-what do you mean?"

"I-I mean, what is it with your attitude?" Chris asked. "You're not getting angry at anything I'm telling you. I-I mean, you're not even looking mad because of something I thought you'd thought it was offensive to you…"

The Lucario shook a bit with fright. "I-it's just that… I… I… I don't know what to do here alone…"

"… What?"

"It's true…" the Lucario muttered. "I mean, what am I supposed to do? I'm not like the kind of Pokémon who fight before asking. I like to think carefully before fighting, but I don't fight unless I see someone dear to me in danger like… my trainer…"

"… I… see…" Chris muttered. "(I think I hurt his feelings…)"

"… And when I came into this place, you started to explain really weird facts," the Lucario said. "However, since you nursed me back to health, I thought you weren't hostile. Your aura was very pacific and warm, enough to convince me you were a good person."

"You… sensed my aura?"

"Yes. I sense auras beforehand so I can determine who's a harmless person and who's a dangerous person," the Lucario explained. "And… I can read minds thanks to my aura, and I read yours, and everything didn't seem like a lie at all. You really knew those were truths… and they scared me… a lot…" he muttered the last part.

Chris looked worried. The Lucario, surprisingly, looked very afraid. "W-well… I'm not kidding here or trying to fool you… To be honest, I'm frightened a bit at this whole thing of a real Pokémon jumping out my mere DS…"

The Lucario stared at Chris. "You are?"

"You don't get to see a *six* feet tall Lucario coming out from a small screen through a Poké Ball commonly around these parts…" Chris said skeptically. "T-that's really impossible, but you still did it…"

"…"

"And you expect me to react scared?" Chris asked. "I-I'm honestly scared, or really frightened about this whole thing! It's just that I remain calm to be careful… How does this explain that you came in here, breaking apart some reality?"

"I'm as confused as you are," the Lucario said, shrugging at the thought.

Chris sighed. "Oh goodness, this is all so… Just… I-I don't know what to believe anymore…"

"…" the Lucario looked down. "… Maybe I should just leave this place and find my way back home… You don't look like you want me here, and I think the same as well…"

"… Wait… you going OUT here?" Chris asked. "O-oh NO, you're not leaving this place!"

The Aura Pokémon took this as some kind of suggestion that he was captured against his will. He glared a bit at Chris. "What is that supposed to mean? Are you trying to say you kidnapped me?"

"(… H-holy crap, his glare looks really threatening to me. It looks even worse when he's taller than me…)" Chris gulped. "I-I'm not kidnapping you! H-haven't you thought that I'm the only person of the whole planet who's not going to freak out and call the police to restrain you?"

"You're going to do that to me?" It seemed that the Lucario's glare looked more and more menacing, but the fact that his hands flared up with aura made it clear that he was about to leap at Chris and beat the hell out of him at any second.

However, Chris was a nice thinker. His forehead sweated a lot, but his mind avoided getting into a state of panic. "P-please, don't hit me or do something to me!" he said as he backed away to the wall. "Y-you told me you thought before making an action, you remember that? A-also, you told me I had a nice aura, and I'm really a nice person! W-why would I kidnap someone who would surely kill me off, anyway?"

The Lucario glared at Chris. A silence took place in the room before the Lucario's aura vanished completely. He sighed in shame and looked down. "… Sorry for sounding threatening… I-I… was getting very stressed about all this…"

"(Translation: h-he'll kill me off very soon if I don't do this right,)" Chris thought with worry at the sight of the ashamed Lucario. "W-what I was trying to say before you were about to hurt me i-is that, if you go out there, people will scream and label you as a monster!"

"But I'm not a monster…" the Lucario muttered.

"I-I know you're not a monster," Chris said. "I-I think I can live with seeing you around now that you seem docile… as long as you behave yourself…"

"… I will," he muttered.

"…" Chris looked preoccupied and moved closer to the edge of his bed. "R-really, everything is just fine for now. As long as you listen to me, you won't get in any trouble while you're here with me."

The Lucario looked ashamed at Chris. "… I don't think I'll handle this very well, not without my trainer…" He looked to the drawer where his Poké Ball. "… My Poké Ball…"

Chris glanced at the spherical object. "Oh, that… That's how you came into this place."

The Lucario shrugged. "How unbelievable…"

"…" Chris looked away. "… Let me guess something… you really want to go back to your world as soon as possible, right?"

"Yes…"

"… But… I-I don't know how, though…" Chris muttered. "If I knew, I could've helped you right after you were healed…"

The Lucario looked concerned. "So… am I… stuck in here?"

"…" Chris silently nodded, making the Lucario's fear grow. "… I'm sorry for telling you this… It must be hard to believe for you, a-and for me as well, but… "

"… It's okay…" the Lucario said, "it's not your fault, anyway…"

The teen forced a worried smile. He tried to cheer the creature up. "… But at least you're here, though," he said. "You're not somewhere where your life is in danger or something, right?"

"…" The Lucario remained silent, looking down upon the floor.

"(Oh great, now he's going to be mopping around with that attitude…)" Chris thought. "(I can't have him look like this. He looks really sad, even though his eyes kind of give a glare… N-no, I need to do something for him. I-I can avoid making him mad, a-and it's easy for me to show some hospitality.)"

"…" The Lucario sat down on the floor and sighed. "What do I do now…" he trailed off. "I'm stuck in this place without any means to go back…"

"I-I'm sorry, really," Chris said. "I would like to know a way to get you back to your world, but I don't know one… It's really going to be impossible to accomplish a big feat like that in here…"

"…" The silence the Lucario made a few times made Chris feel uncomfortable. The teen thought it was amazing that a Lucario was

there before his eyes, but it didn't look that exciting if that same Lucario didn't look better than being depressed.

Sadly giving up, Chris sighed and frowned. "… I don't know what to do to help you," Chris said. "… But maybe I should leave you alone for the time being…"

The Lucario looked at him. "Well… maybe I need time to think about what I should do now. It could concern you, but… I wish to be alone and think more about this… Please, ignore me and do whatever you do here in your home…"

Chris gave the Lucario a worried look. "Okay, if you insist…" he trailed off before he went stood up and started to fix his bed with the bed sheets, Lucario remaining still in front of it as he stared at the TV's reflection depicting him and Chris fixing his bed.

The Aura Pokémon closed his eyes and sighed while Chris ignored his presence. For Chris, it was a bit hard to ignore Lucario. He accidentally looked at the Lucario's back just to satisfy himself that he was real. He shook his head at this, trying to focus on his usual house chores. He felt a very odd guilt that couldn't cheer him up.

The Lucario's left ear seemed to be listening to some mutters Chris was making. "… It's kind of nice that there's someone here in my house, though…" Chris muttered. "At least I don't feel like I'm all alone… but still, I… don't feel different…"

It was better to ask away so the Lucario didn't feel stressed over his current problem.

"Pardon me?" the Lucario suddenly asked, turning to his left to look at Chris. "Sorry, but I happened to listen that it was good you weren't alone anymore… Why is that?"

Chris just finished with his bed and looked a bit shocked at the Lucario. "U-um, you heard me talking to myself?" he asked.

"I did," the Lucario stated. "And now that I think about it… don't people have families living in a same house like this one?"

Chris chuckled nervously. "Oh, that… W-well, I'm an exception to that fact…"

"What? You are?"

"Y-yes," Chris said, hinting some kind of depression. "I don't know if I should just tell this to you…"

"I'm kind of interested, but if you don't want to…" the Lucario trailed off.

Chris smiled a bit. He thought again to change his thoughts. "… I think it's okay if I tell you," he said. "… You see, my family is just my dad, my mom, and me. Both of them have been away ever since I graduated from kindergarten."

"Why is that?"

Chris looked down. "My parents work as business specialists. They both met in university and fell in love. Their job is a weird one to me because they help companies across the country and sometimes overseas to provide plans for further development to nourish them all with complicated ideas and plans."

"That is amazing," the Lucario remarked as he blinked a bit. "… But why leave you behind? Wouldn't it be better if you went with them?"

Chris looked outside the window. "Their work is so hard that they have to be traveling almost everywhere, and they needed to do it so they could maintain me," Chris explained. "And honestly speaking, they thought it was better for me if I remained somewhere where I didn't have to be constantly setting in. This is where we live so it'd be obvious for me to settle in a place like this city. Luckily, I have my uncles watching over me whenever I want some company."

"…" The Lucario nodded. "And if you're all alone here, how do you manage to live by yourself?"

"My uncles constantly drop by like two times a week," Chris said. "They like me. They cook for me. Thanks to them, I got used to live alone… but it's kind of… very sad for me to rest in a house where there's no one else rather than myself. They used to live here until I learned how to cook for myself. I'm not a good cook, but at least I can make food."

"It… must've been really hard for you…" the Lucario muttered in remark.

"D-don't get me wrong. I'm very used to this kind of thing," Chris said with a nervous smile. "I have a few friends who drop by every once in a while, so it's all good."

"…" The Lucario stared at Chris for some seconds. "… But you still feel very alone, right?"

"… W-well… yes…" Chris muttered. "Since you're here… I thought it'd be nice if you settled in here… but that's just wishful thinking. I don't want to force you to stay here, anyway. Even if it's amazing that you're here… I have to keep a straight face and be honest and fair."

The Lucario looked away for a moment before looking back at Chris. "And seeing that I don't have a way to go back to my world, it made you think I'd stay here with you?"

"Unless… you want to go out and become pursued for looking like some sort of monster…" Chris said. "… If you stay in here, though, you won't get in trouble."

"… I see," the Lucario said.

Chris nodded. "So don't think bad stuff about me, okay? Don't worry, either."

" I won't think about it during my stay in this place with you. I'll live with you so you don't feel alone, and so I can be safe. It looks like a nice place to live, and… you seem very nice."

"Of course it is," Chris said with a chuckle before he walked away from the room through the door, the Lucario staring at him in confusion.

"… I thought he was going to get happy for me because I said I wanted to stay with him," the Lucario muttered to himself.

At that moment, Chris peeked from the door at the Lucario. The Aura Pokémon turned to look at him. "W-what did you just say just now?" Chris asked in shock.

"I… said I was going to live with you," the Lucario said.

Chris shook his head in shock before he quickly walked over to the Lucario's side. Even though he looked surprised, he maintained a careful approach and mind to the Lucario. "W-what? A-are you even sure about your decision? I-I mean, I know you're stuck in here and all that, but seriously, you're planning to stay here with me?"

The Lucario nodded. "I don't have a place to go in this… world," he said. "And seeing that you're kind enough to me, why not stay here?"

"W-well, for one, it doesn't really concern you to live here," Chris said with honesty. "Really, you're just jumping over the fence…"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means you're making quick decisions…" Chris shook his head. "B-but anyway, I don't want you to live here if you don't want to! Really, I'm used to live alone already…"

"And I want to break that depressing thought," the Lucario said before he stood up, looking down at Chris. "I read your mind, and

you were looking even worse when you were talking about you being alone. Even you were thinking about avoiding crying."

Chris blushed a bit. "I-I… Y-you're really lucky to have mind-reading powers," he admitted. "B-but yes, I was thinking about that… Wait, I'm not even your trainer!"

"But you have my Poké Ball with you," the Lucario pointed out, glancing at the mentioned object. "My other trainer left it behind, and you have it with you now, so you might be some kind of temporal replacement until I get to go back… provided there's some kind of way, that is…"

Chris looked worried, noticing the Lucario's depressed look. "Please, stop looking so depressed…" Chris said.

The Lucario looked at him. "You're the one looking depressed. You were thinking you didn't want me to go as well."

"O-okay, seriously, stop reading my mind right now," Chris said in embarrassment. "You're being a bit annoying, you… mind stalker…"

"Sorry…" the Lucario muttered, "it's just that I wanted to get my stress out of me. I wanted to do something else so I didn't feel like this…"

"And staying here will help you with that?"

"Why not? I think it'll be a nice thing if a stayed here. Why are you opting against it?"

"I-I'm not so sure about that decision because it just doesn't seem right to me to make you stay while I'm not even telling you to do so," Chris said worried. "… Is it really good for you?"

"It is."

"… I don't know if I should listen…" Chris muttered. "Having to live alone by yourself makes you a serious person; otherwise I'd been

really excited and happy for you coming in here…"

"Well, I think I like your attitude," the Lucario said. "I know you're an honest person. I can try to become used to live here."

Chris shook his head. "I-I'm still skeptical, though," he said. "If you're really sure about staying here, then… I won't say no, but if you do, you'll have to listen to what I have to say because you don't know anything about this world…"

The Lucario nodded. "That's fine with me."

The way the Lucario responded sounded as if he had accepted Chris as his trainer. The teen blinked a bit, concerned about the situation. "… Okay…" Chris muttered. "So… now you're the first guest to stay in my house…"

The Lucario nodded once more. "I won't do anything bad while I'm here. If you want, I can stay somewhere in here and meditate."

Chris looked a bit worried. "… Do you just meditate all day or what? I think it sounds a bit boring to me."

"But it helps to channel and hone my aura," the Lucario said. "It's also very calm and nice."

"Well, I honestly think you can do better than that," Chris said. "W-what else do you do besides meditating all day?"

"I fight against other Pokémon… eat… meditate… and sleep…" the Lucario trailed off.

"(… What am I thinking that's something Pokémon in the games do ALL day?)" Chris thought with skepticism. "(They need to do other things like that, seriously…) O-okay, since I'm a bit concerned about what you do, I'm going to show you how to spend the time."

The Lucario looked confused. "But it is fine with me to do what I always do. My trainer made me do that."

"(If that's true… then I might be guilty because I technically control the trainer…)" Chris thought. "Well… that trainer of yours… (and if I say something insulting, he'll kill me off for sure. Lucarios are loyal Pokémon to their trainers, am I right?)… didn't teach you that many things for sure…"

"She didn't?"

"(… Oh, right, I chose the girl Dawn in the Diamond version and Lucas in the Pearl version…) T-that's what I can tell," Chris said. "You haven't done more things like watching TV or doing some kind of hobby? I think Pokémon are capable of doing other stuff…"

The Lucario looked away. "Now that you mention it… I think I can do more…"

"(And is it just me or is he way too naïve?)" Chris thought. "(I don't really like people being this naïve…) If you think you can do more, then… maybe I could help you out."

"Can you?" the Lucario asked with a bit of interest.

"S-sure, I don't mind as long as you listen to me," Chris said. "A Pokémon like you can do a lot more than all those things. I'm sure of it."

The Lucario thought for a moment. "If that's so… maybe I'll make me feel less stressed."

"(I can see him destroying something to its oblivion…)" Chris shrugged at the thought. "(I saw how his hands flared with aura… Come to think of it… can he use his attacks in here? I… better not ask or else he could do one and destroy something in my room…)"

"So…" the Lucario shifted his eyes around, "what are you going to do?"

"Huh? Oh, well, I-I'm going to eat breakfast," Chris said. "You can come if you want."

"Do you have Oran Berries?"

Chris stared at him. "… No, there aren't any Oran Berries in here… and other things you were fed in your world…"

"… Am I going to starve to death?"

"D-don't be so silly," Chris said in disgust. "You've never eaten hotcakes, scrambled eggs, or even a small sandwich?"

"No, because I've never eaten those before… I was usually inside my Poké Ball all the time."

"(I pity him so much…)" Chris thought. "(It must be really boring to be inside that thing for long periods of time…)" He looked serious at the Lucario. "Well, from now on, I'll make sure you get to see everything you've been missing."

The Lucario stared at him. "I've been missing many things?"

"Oh god, you don't even know how many," Chris said. "Look, I'll try my best to let you see and know everything you need to see and know. The way you currently are isn't really going to benefit you that much during your stance in my home."

The Lucario sighed. "Maybe…"

"(Okay, he seems calm and obedient enough for someone to tell him stuff,)" Chris thought. "(Thank goodness he isn't a wild Lucario… but even so, there aren't any wild Lucarios you can catch in the games…)" He nodded at the Lucario. "Do you want to eat breakfast with me? I can picture you eating hotcakes. I can cook a few things, though, but my uncles usually make leftovers and dishes for me to eat later."

The Lucario's belly suddenly growled a bit, making him blush in embarrassment. "I… suppose I want to eat…"

"… P-pfft…" Chris chuckled a bit. "Y-you know, it looks a bit funny that you have a bit of a skinny body and you're hungry… (But, then again, with how big he is, it doesn't really look that different now…)"

The Lucario looked a bit annoyed at this. "I only eat when I'm hungry, not when I want to."

"You look like the kind of serious people who eat only when needed, but it's not bad to eat something you want to eat unless you don't have control," Chris explained. "But anyway, come with me, please."

As the teen turned around, the Lucario held out his hand. "W-wait, please," the Lucario said, stopping Chris on his tracks.

Chris turned to look at the Lucario. "Is something bothering you?"

"No, I… just wanted to ask for your name," the Lucario said.

"… M-my name? Oh, right, I didn't introduce myself yet," Chris said before forcing a smile. "You can call me Chris, that's my name. I don't like to mention my full name because it's… embarrassing to me."

"Chris…" the Lucario said. "That's a nice name," he said.

"Is it? Oh, thank you…" Chris said embarrassed. "So… do you have a nickname or you're just named Lucario?"

"Just Lucario," the Lucario said. "I hate pointless nicknames."

"Me too," Chris admitted before he chuckled. "W-well then, nice to meet you, Lucario. I hope your stance here is of your liking…"

"Nice to meet you too, Chris," Lucario said. "Can you do me a favor?"

"W-what would that be?"

"Could you… stop stuttering as if I'm going to hurt you?" Lucario asked. "It's useless and annoying to stutter even if I'm not going to do something bad. You can trust me that I won't do any harm to you or your house."

Chris sighed with relief. "R-really? Oh, sorry… I think I can trust you fully now," he admitted, making a true smile. "In fact, I'm getting very used in seeing your face."

"If you're going to say something like I glare all day, you're wrong," Lucario said.

"But I might be lying, though…" Chris muttered. "… I'll pull this out somehow. Have some faith in me, okay?"

"Since you're the only one here… I'll put all the faith in you," Lucario said.

"I won't disappoint you… I guess," Chris said. "Well, let's go and eat to the living room."

The Aura Pokémon obeyed and followed the teen out from the room. As they both walked out, Lucario found himself walking in a hallway where the space was big. There were five rooms on each side, giving ten rooms in total. The walls were white, and the floor had white tiles. Lucario blinked at this before looking at Chris. "Why are here so many rooms while you're the only person living in this house?"

"Oh, well, t-that's because my parents wanted to have a big house so I could have some maids to attend me, but I said I didn't want to, but the construction was done before I could say something. This happened like five years ago. They requested the construction during that time."

"And you like how it looks now?"

"Kind of," Chris said. "If you're the only one in here, you hear echoes. At least I don't have somebody in here that accidentally snores during the night. You can listen to those sounds very well."

"Has somebody lived in here with you before?"

"My uncles and cousins, but that happens rarely," Chris explained.

Lucario also found some tables where small frames with photos of Chris and his parents were. The Aura Pokémon sometimes stopped to look at the photos, which made Chris stop as well. Lucario grabbed a portrait and looked at the photo. "These are your parents, right?"

"Yes," Chris said. "This photo was taken a year ago when they came to have some days with me."

"You three look happy."

"You'd be happy to see them if you had a situation like I do," Chris said with a sigh.

Lucario looked at Chris's depressed expression. "S-sorry if I brought up this all of a sudden…" he apologized.

"It's okay," Chris said. "Like I said before, I'm used to this," he said before walking away.

Lucario stared at Chris for a while, thinking about being careful not to bring depressing matters that haunted the teen's childhood. The Aura Pokémon put the frame on the table and followed Chris.

Once the two walked out from the hallway, they found themselves standing in a wide living room. The exit was just located to the far right corner of the room, and there was a red sofa in front of a flat screen TV on the front wall. Several other portraits were hanging around the walls; some of them being other kinds of portraits other than photos. To the left was the kitchen, which looked as big as the

living room. A long table with plates, forks, spoons, and butter knifes were positioned just in front of the kitchen. There were some stairs going up to a new floor right beside the left side of the hallway, but Lucario wasn't interested in going up.

"There's a lot of space in here," Lucario said, his voice echoing a bit.

"And this is only the first floor," Chris said as he walked towards the kitchen. "This house has three floors. The second floor has some more rooms, and there are three bathrooms in there as well. There is also a terrace with a nice view of the neighborhood. The third floor is a big attic where we store decorations and other stuff. Outside, we have a wide backyard for parties, but I don't like to hold parties that much. Too bad I don't have a pool in there because that would be nice to have."

Lucario looked at the windows with cream-colored curtains.

"Oh, and I think it's okay for you to look outside as long as nobody is outside," he said as he entered the kitchen.

Lucario instead took a seat on the sofa to look at his surroundings. The Aura Pokémon relaxed for a bit before he looked up to the fan hanging on the ceiling of the room. "… I think everything seems fine for now," he muttered before looking to the kitchen where Chris was already preparing the breakfast. "Somehow, I think that I'm a bit intrigued to see more of this world… but it's all so confusing…"

Lucario saw that Chris smiled for a moment.

"…" Lucario made a small smile. "Maybe I should just wait and see what happens here. He looks nice and trustworthy to me… (I'm going to be careful around him, though… I'm still scared…)"

While Chris poured some flour in a bowl, he was deep in thought about Lucario. "(It's still so weird for me to have a Lucario sitting in my living room,)" Chris thought as he went to the fridge to get some

eggs. "(I'm going to be careful around him, though… I'm still scared… I hope he doesn't read my thoughts all the time…)"

The Aura Pokémon just sat back and looked up to the ceiling, thinking about the situation he was facing. Many thoughts raced inside his mind; some about what he would do in the world he was in, and some about the hospitality he was offered to get. It was confusing for him, but he thought that he could manage to do anything as long as the teen would be his guide.

Lucario didn't consider Chris as his trainer. Chris was just some sort of replacement for his previous trainer. The Aura Pokémon couldn't change teams. It looked as if he had an emergency person for him to stay. On the other hand, Lucario thought there were some differences between Chris and the trainer.

For a brief moment, Lucario thought Chris seemed to be more interesting. Lucario shook the thought away, not wanting to think about somebody else being better than his trainer was.

Some time of thinking passed, and Lucario could smell the scent of warm bread floating about. "Breakfast's ready," Chris called over, walking out from the kitchen with two plates with hotcakes on them. "Get over here to the table to eat, Lucario."

Lucario stood up and looked at Chris. "You want me to take a seat?"

"Yes," Chris said. "You're not really going to eat on the floor, right? You should eat on a table."

"I'm used to eat on the floor."

Such twisted fact made Chris look a bit in disgust at Lucario.

"… Oh no, you're going to be a little bit more sophisticated than that," Chris said while he shook his head. "You're going to eat while sitting on a chair. It's too ridiculous to put a plate down on the floor for you."

Lucario stared at Chris. "Fine… whatever you say…" he muttered as he went over to the table.

Chris sat down on a chair while Lucario stared at one besides the teen before he slowly sat on it. His tail was stuck from moving anywhere from the right side. Lucario looked at Chris. "I think it's a bit better…" he commented.

"It's much better," Chris said. "I don't know you, but I think you have potential from turning into a sophisticated Pokémon."

"I have?" Lucario asked.

The fact that Lucario asked too many questions at once made Chris think Lucario was careful. He expected Lucario to just ignore him completely and lean to wall, but he was actually listening.

"… Seriously now," Chris began, "why is it that you are so… calm and collective?"

"Why are you asking me that?" Lucario asked. "I'm not like those Lucarios who tend to be lone wolves or something. I admit I only listen to my trainer, but since you're the only one I can rely on for now…"

"… You want to put all your loyalty on me instead of any other person out in this world," Chris said.

"…" Lucario looked away. "Yes… I said before that you were honest."

"But then, you're like the Lucarios who tend to be lone wolves," Chris said. "You're just shifting your loyalty to me because you don't have your trainer with you. I'm just a replacement for you, right?"

Lucario looked back at him and shook his head. "No, that sounds offensive to say," he said. "You're more like… a friend I can trust."

"…" Chris sighed and briefly smiled at the friendly "F" word. "Okay, I get the picture now. You're like a clueless Pokémon who doesn't know what to do but still uses his mind to think about a nice solution."

"Yes."

"… That works enough for me," Chris said with a small smile before looking at the hotcakes. "We better start eating before they get cold."

"Right…" Lucario said skeptically.

Lucario merely kept staring down at his hotcakes while Chris himself began to eat them with maple syrup he had brought to the table earlier. Looking to his right, Chris looked at Lucario. "What is it now? Why aren't you eating?" Chris asked.

"I don't know if I should eat this with my hands or the forks you're using," Lucario said.

Chris sighed and set down his fork. "Well, I know I've never seen a Pokémon using a fork (except in the anime), but I'll teach you how…" He stared at Lucario's three fingers on each hand. "… Oh my god…"

Surprisingly enough, Chris looked shocked once Lucario moved his fingers individually. Chris always thought the fingers never moved alone, but his thoughts were proved wrong. "Is it bad that I only have three fingers instead of five like humans do?" Lucario asked.

"W-well, no…" Chris trailed off. "You're… moving your fingers individually and not together… Hmm… let's see… If you want to grab a fork, then you should grab it with two fingers while using the last one to hold it firmly, and that shouldn't be much of a problem with holding a butter knife… Yes… It does sound like it could work…"

A few seconds later…

Lucario was now grabbing a fork in his right hand and a butter knife on his left hand.

"There," Chris said. "Wow, I never thought you could pull it out, but you did…"

"Thank you?" Lucario thanked, confused as he held his utensils.

"U-um, you're welcome…" Chris said. "Now, let's start eating…"

Lucario looked back at his plate before he started to cut some pieces of the hotcakes. He pinched a pile with his fork and slowly bit them with his fangs. Once he started munching them inside his mouth, Lucario made a small smile.

Chris chuckled. "How does it taste?"

Lucario looked at him and nodded before swallowing his food. "It tastes good," Lucario said. "I can't believe I didn't eat this before."

"Heheheh, I know," Chris chuckled heartily. "I knew it was going to be good for you. Now you should finish eating it by yourself. Oh, add some syrup to it so it tastes better," he said, spilling some maple syrup over a side of Lucario's plate. "There, try to dip a piece into it. If you end up liking it, which I know you will, you can add more."

Lucario had some more confidence in the instruction before he did as he was told. Soon, Lucario found himself eating hotcakes with maple syrup while Chris did the same. The Aura Pokémon tasted the breakfast as if he had never eaten something different before. Every bite he took made him feel very relaxed. He would occasionally glance towards Chris, finding him minding his own plate. Lucario could see a small smile forming on the teen as he ate. For a brief moment, Lucario sensed that there was some kind of a nice feeling to see the teen smiling, just as if Lucario did a nice action to make Chris happy.

Lucario suddenly shook his head and returned to eat in silence. He wanted to finish eating before Chris could see he was looking at him.

After finishing eating, Chris set his plate aside and looked at Lucario, who had been finished with his breakfast as well. "Was it good?" Chris asked.

"Yes, it was," Lucario said, making a happy expression. "It was very tasty."

Chris couldn't help but think it looked a bit curious to see a Lucario giving a happy expression like that. The teen smiled a bit, and he even though it looked a bit cute.

"I'm glad you liked it," Chris said. "Satisfied?"

"Very much," Lucario said nodding.

"Well… that's good," Chris said. "Now, let's watch TV together."

Lucario looked confused. "Watch TV?"

"I'm certain you didn't watch TV before, right?"

"… No…"

"Then you're missing a whole part of everything because there's much more to see in TV."

"Really? How much?"

"Well… not that much because many things can be boring…" Chris said. "But that depends of what you'd like to see."

"I didn't watch TV because I was constantly traveling around with my trainer," Lucario said.

"More of a reason to make you watch TV," Chris said before he pushed his chair away and stood up. "Come with me. We're going to

watch TV for a long time. There's a good program schedule today."

Lucario was still confused, but he listened to Chris and decided to follow him to the living room where Chris began to show Lucario some TV programs.

The day passed, and night came in fast. Chris and Lucario were now returning to Chris's room where Chris sat down on his bed and looked up at Lucario. "So, how was everything so far?"

Lucario nodded. "It was very nice," he said. "I think I liked to see those 'anime' programs you showed me. I liked the ones with those hard battles."

"You did?" Chris asked. "I think that could suggest you want to have a battle like that…"

Lucario looked away. "I like to fight against other Pokémon… It allows me to get skilled… but it's too bad that there aren't any Pokémon in here besides m-"

This was a clear sign Lucario was going to get homesick.

"O-oh no, don't you dare get sad now!" Chris interrupted, shocking Lucario a bit. "Look, before you start getting depressed, you have to stay optimistic."

Lucario looked unsure. "How can I stay optimistic at a time like this? I don't know how to go back to my world."

Chris sighed. "Okay, I don't know either…" he admitted. "… But… just try not to look sad, you got that? It makes me feel guilty that you're going through all this, and I'm trying my best to make you feel comfortable… unless I'm doing a bad job at it…"

Lucario quickly shook his head. "N-no, it's not your fault. To the contrary, I'm very grateful for your hospitality to this point. Thanks to

you, I'm experiencing many new things," he said. "I couldn't be fortunate if it wasn't… because of you, Chris."

The teen stared at the Aura Pokémon before he smiled a bit. "Well… thank you, Lucario… It makes me happy to hear that from a person like you. You're not that bad at all."

Lucario looked away in embarrassment. "I-I'm just being nice and careful, that's all…"

"Those traits will help you a lot as you stay in here," Chris said before he yawned. "But for now… I want to sleep…"

Lucario nodded and sat down on the floor's mattress. "Fine," he said.

Chris gasped a bit. "Wait, are you seriously going to sleep on the floor?"

Lucario nodded again. "I sleep by meditating in peace. Besides, I don't think your bed has enough space for both of us to fit in."

Chris looked to his bed. "… Well… that's true…" he muttered.

"Please, don't insist," Lucario said. "I'll sleep by sitting down against the bed like this," he said before he moved his back and leaned it against the bed. He looked over his left shoulder to Chris. "See? It's fine by me. It's not that cold, but honestly speaking, I can handle a little cold very well."

Chris looked worried at this. "Okay… if you say so…" he trailed off before he slowly lied down on his bed and covered himself with his bed sheets. He looked to the right where Lucario looked over his right shoulder at him. "Before I go to sleep… how can you talk? I've never seen a Lucario talking by using the mouth…"

"You haven't?" Lucario asked. "I thought all Lucarios were like I am. I didn't speak much before because I was always distracted by all the battles I've been taking part of."

"(I can't believe he doesn't know much about his own kind…)" Chris thought. "(But I'm too tired to keep asking or doing something else… I'd better ask tomorrow and see what else I can find out…) It doesn't matter," Chris said. "It's nice to see you can talk that way. I'd be a bit spooky to me if you talked through telepathy."

"I can do that," Lucario said. "It's very easy for me."

"O-okay, don't do it, please," Chris shrugged before he yawned and closed his eyes. "Oh well, good night, Lucario…"

"… Good night, Chris…" Lucario muttered before he faced the TV in front of the bed and closed his eyes.

Lucario heard Chris yawning once more before he turned to the wall to the right of the bed and fell asleep. The Aura Pokémon then glanced out to the window where he saw the moon in the sky. He stared at it for a moment before he silently sighed to himself. "(The moon here doesn't look that different… It looks a bit better, maybe…)" he thought. "(… I'm scared about all this…)" he thought with worry. "(What if I'm stuck forever in this world? I can't think of anything right now, and I'm also scared about what lies in here…)"

Suddenly, Lucario overheard a small chuckle coming from Chris. The Aura Pokémon looked over his right shoulder where Chris kept chuckling to himself. Curious about what Chris was chuckling, Lucario decided to use his telepathy to listen to the teen.

Lucario found out Chris wasn't fully asleep yet.

"(I can't believe there's a Lucario right besides me…)" Chris thought. "(And… I can hardly believe he's staying in here with me… That makes me feel not that alone anymore, and I have a very special person to keep me some company… I… I could never ask for something more than having him here… I'm… really going to miss him if he were to go back to his world… so… I'll have to make him feel comfortable here until that happens… Please, Lucario… stay here with me a little longer so I don't be alone… This is just a

whim… but… I want you to keep living with me… if you want to…)" Chris yawned a bit more before he fell asleep completely.

Lucario blinked at this before he looked back outside to the sky. Staring at the moon, the Aura Pokémon suddenly smiled a bit to himself before chuckling mentally. "(… But now that I think about it myself… I'm not alone in this, and I'm doing something good for him…)"

He closed his eyes and leaned back to the bed.

"(… Maybe… this isn't going to be as bad as I thought it would be… Honestly, this… is going to be a completely new experience for me… and I hope Chris can take care of me… and… I'll do the same in exchange for him…)"

Lucario looked back to Chris, who now slowly turned to face him with closed eyes.

"(… I'm sure of this,)" Lucario thought before he closed his eyes and fell asleep while the moonlight illuminated the room with the two sleeping in peace.

The moon kept shining throughout the nighttime, giving a calm atmosphere inside the room, perfect for having a night to sleep nicely for the Aura Pokémon.

Phew, this chapter turned out much better than the first version. I swear the first version looked like everything was so fast paced. I hope this one looked more realistic to you.

Also, the title is a bit of a reference to those special Pokémon you get through special events. Figure out why it was used here since it shouldn't be that hard.

I encourage aura apprentices to review. ;)

A Very Calm, Relaxing Approach

Unlike the original chapter, this chapter has new scenes to cover up some details. As always, I'm doing my best to make this a much more interesting story.

I encourage all readers to read on, enjoy, and review. :)

Chapter 3: A Very Calm, Relaxing Approach

The birds' chirps sounded outside the room as Lucario slept while leaning against the bed. The Aura Pokémon slowly opened his eyes and mildly yawned. He looked around the room a bit before looking back at Chris, who was still sleeping. Lucario stared at him for a bit, thinking what the teen would show him today if there was something else he hadn't done before.

Out of a cue, the teen yawned loudly and woke up. He turned his head to Lucario and nearly yelped. "A-aah!" Chris yelped, startling Lucario.

"G-good morning," Lucario greeted startled.

Chris backed away a bit. "S-sorry, you were staring right at me after I opened my eyes. I-I got scared, t-that's all…" he trailed off embarrassed.

Lucario looked down a bit. "I'm sorry…"

"Well, you kind of have a scary-looking face…" Chris muttered. "… But… good morning, anyway…"

An awkward silence ensued between the two.

"…" Lucario looked away. "… What are you going to do today?" he asked.

"U-um, I was about to make breakfast for the two of us, but I completely forgot to take a shower yesterday because I was… distracted with you."

"I'm sorry for that," Lucario apologized.

"Oh, it's okay," Chris said, forcing a smile. "I actually like to show you anything a normal person does."

Lucario turned to Chris. "Should a Pokémon really try to do the same stuff humans do?" he asked.

Chris rubbed his chin. "Well, I never thought about that… but seeing that you didn't really get sick with eating normal breakfast, I suppose Pokémon can do it…" He chuckled and stared at Lucario. "If that's true, then you can do a lot more things than I'd ever do by myself. I'm a bit jealous."

Lucario shook his head. "I don't know if I can do what a human can do," he said before his eyes drifted away. "… But I think I like to do other stuff than battling and meditating all the time."

"(I've got to wonder why he doesn't look like a bodybuilder yet,)" Chris thought. "Don't get so discouraged. With some time, you'll be doing the same things I do every day."

"I'll try to distract myself from getting depressed…"

"You sound depressed now," Chris pointed out.

"I-I know," Lucario said embarrassed.

Chris looked at the door. "Well, I need to take a shower before I forget again," he said. "A shower… Wait, that reminds me about something else."

"What?"

The teen looked at the Aura Pokémon. "Do Pokémon take showers often?" he asked.

"A shower?" Lucario said.

"Yes, as in cleaning yourselves," Chris said.

"Oh, we clean ourselves."

"… How?" Chris asked before he shrugged. "I-I hope you don't clean yourself by licking your body…"

Lucario looked upset at this. "I'm not some kind of filthy Growlithe if that's what you're trying to say," he said.

"N-no, sorry," Chris said with a gulp, making Lucario stop glaring at him. "I honestly thought you did that because you look like a dog…"

"…" Lucario stared at Chris.

"… Fine, you don't really look like a dog," Chris said. "But how do you clean yourself?"

"I just enter a body of water and dry myself," Lucario said.

"That just won't do."

"It won't?"

"Of course it won't," Chris said. "Water just gets you wet, but it'll just remove stuff like mud but not the smell. I can bet that your…" he stared at Lucario's weird black wheels, "… armpits smell horrible," he finished.

Lucario looked away for a bit. "I've never smelled my armpits before so…"

Chris turned away to avoid seeing the Aura Pokémon smelling his armpits. A fast sneeze clarified the teen's horror about Lucario

before he turned back at him. "Oh my god, you ARE dirty," he said.

Lucario seemed to be shrugging a lot while blushing a bit. "I-it never occurred to me to do that sort of thing like smelling myself… The odor is just… unbearable to my nose…"

"I'm surprised you don't radiate it while you were close to me yesterday during breakfast," Chris said disgusted. "I think it's about time you use soaps and shampoos on yourself. Oh, and you'll be using less water as well."

The Aura Pokémon looked concerned. "Will that make the odor go away?" he asked.

"I'd be dismayed if somebody asked a question like that to me… but in your case, I don't feel like that," Chris said. "Yes, it'll help you to smell clean."

Lucario stood up. "Then please, show me how to take a shower."

Chris chuckled mentally at the request, but he then blushed. "I-I'm afraid you'll have to do it yourself because I can't technically teach you how without losing all my dignity," he explained. "I'll just… give you instructions."

"Why?"

"Because I don't know if you've ever seen someone… naked."

Lucario gasped and shook his head. "I-I understand what you mean now," he said embarrassed. "I-I'll do my best on my own."

"Sheesh, talk about embarrassing," Chris said. "I'm so embarrassed myself just thinking about it."

"C-can we just get over it?" Lucario asked.

"Y-yes!" Chris said as he left the bed. "You'll have to listen to what I say. Normally, it'll take you ten minutes to finish… but I don't know

how long it's going to take you."

"I'll make sure to do it fast…"

"Let's just go to the second floor. The bathroom is there."

The Aura Pokémon nodded, and soon, the two went upstairs to the second floor. The second floor looked almost like the first floor, except for the fact about three bathrooms. A terrace was located behind two windows and white curtains that overlooked the neighborhood of the south. In front of it, there was a living room where three bathrooms and three rooms in some small hallways. On the northeast corner of the floor, a new set of stairs leaded to the attic.

"This floor looks nice," Lucario said.

"I'm glad you like it," Chris said. "You'd think this place is for hanging out. But I guess it's just that because of the terrace."

"Can I see what's outside?" Lucario asked interested.

"Well, the fences of the terrace are big enough to hide you from being seen if you don't walk to the edges. I suppose we could go there after taking a shower…" Chris trailed off. "But… I have other things to do today."

"What do you have to do?"

"It's time for me to seed the garden I have outside in the yard," Chris said. "You can come with me after taking a shower."

Lucario looked at the small hallways with the doors. "Where is the bathroom here?" he asked.

"Each hallway has a room and a bathroom," Chris said. "It doesn't matter which hallway you take." He walked to the left hallway where a mirror hung in the wall, and opened the door of a blue-tiled

bathroom. He then entered inside. "You can use this one over here," he called out.

The Aura Pokémon followed the teen into the blue-tiled bathroom. It was big enough for three people to be inside, with the actual bath situated on the right corner, occupying a quarter of space of the room. A sink was situated next to the left side of the entrance with a toilet on the right side. Several towels were hanging on the right wall.

Chris turned to Lucario. "If you want to dry yourself, you'll use one of those towels," he said as he pointed at the towels hanging on the bars. "While you're here, you won't shake your body to dry. I don't want this place to be soaked with drops."

"I can't dry myself like I normally do?" Lucario asked.

"Of course not," Chris said. "Using a towel is the most sophisticated way to dry one's body." He stared at Lucario's spikes. "Just… be careful not to rip the towels with your spikes, please."

"I'll be careful…" Lucario muttered.

The teen turned towards the bath. "And there's the place where you'll be taking the shower," he said.

Around ten minutes later, Chris left the room, and steam began escaping under the doorframe. The teen remained behind to see if Lucario was going to have any troubles with the bath.

Chris's fears soon erupted in the form of Lucario yelling. "I-it's so hot!" he complained inside the bathroom.

"Turn the lever to the right, turn it, quick!" Chris yelled.

"W-where is it? I-I forgot!"

"I told you it was facing the wall!"

A lever turning to the right was heard.

"I-it's so cold now!" Lucario complained.

"T-twist the lever a little bit to the left!" Chris instructed.

And soon, a relieved sigh made Chris sigh himself. He felt silent as he waited Lucario to finish with his shower. The water's sounds ended, and a figure stepped out of the bath… then started shaking madly.

"THE TOWEL!" Chris yelled.

"S-sorry," Lucario apologized behind the door. "I forgot the steps already…"

Chris sighed. "Did you make sure you didn't leave any parts in your body full of soap?"

"I don't have any soap left…"

"Good, now dry yourself with a towel, and DON'T rip it in the process," Chris instructed. "You'll be done very soon."

Lucario felt silent before he grabbed a towel and began drying his body with it. Chris closed his eyes dismayed as he thought that Lucario didn't learn well enough how to take a shower by himself. If this were true, then Chris would have to watch out for him every time he would take a shower. "(This is probably the only lesson he didn't understand. Great, now I'll have to be more careful…)"

Chris recalled something…

"(… Is he really a dog? He shakes to dry his body…)" Chris shrugged at the thought before the door of the bathroom opened with a clean Lucario walking out to meet up with him. "Oh, you're… fluffy…"

Chris stared at Lucario's yellow fur. Apparently, the shower had made his fur all fluffy and spongy. It was so fluffy that it even outlined his shoulders and his entire throat. The spike on his chest was even

half-buried inside the fur. Lucario blinked confused at Chris's expression. "… Is something the matter?" Lucario asked.

"O-oh my god…" Chris muttered before covering his mouth to hide some chuckles. "L-Lucario, y-your fur is so… so… fluffy…" He reached out to rub a hand on Lucario's fur around his throat, feeling it extremely soft and puffy.

Lucario looked at his yellow fur. "Well, my yellow fur is the longest fur I have in my body. The blue fur I have is fairly shorter than my yellow fur…" He blushed embarrassed.

"A-a-ahahahaha!" Chris laughed a bit. "Y-you look so fluffy, I swear! A-ahahahahahaha! O-oh, m-my funny bone! I-it hurts!" Chris complained jokingly as he held his stomach with both arms.

Lucario grunted angrily at this response. "Do I look so funny to you?" he demanded.

Chris gasped and quickly stopped laughing. "I-I'm sorry, Lucario!" he apologized. "I-I never seen a Lucario with fluff-I-I mean, fur like the one you have! P-please, don't hurt me!"

Lucario kept glaring at Chris before he gasped and stepped back. "I-I'm sorry…" he muttered ashamed. "I… I don't like to be laughed at…"

The teen sighed. "(What a way to ruin the mood…) W-well, I-I'll be careful not to laugh at you anymore… But, geez, it was a small joke…" He looked worried. "It's sometimes good to laugh at yourself when you see your reflection in a mirror…"

"I just tried this out now," Lucario said. "I didn't know what to expect from a shower." He looked at the mirror to see Chris's and his reflection. "… P-pfft…" he stifled a chuckle.

"H-hey, you just chuckled at your image!" Chris complained, startling Lucario.

"I-I couldn't help it after looking at myself in a mirror," Lucario said in his defense.

Chris shook his head. "I feel like we skipped a nice time to laugh together… Oh well, you're just starting to live a life you couldn't experience before." He stared at Lucario. "But you still like this new life, right?"

"Well, the odor is gone, so…"

"Not just because of that…"

"O-oh, then, yes, I'm enjoying my new life," Lucario said. "But I'm sorry for sounding so threatening to you."

"It's okay now… again," Chris said. "Are you getting hungry?"

"I think so," Lucario said.

Chris smiled a bit. "Just let me take a shower myself and you wait for me in the living room below. I'll prepare breakfast as soon as I come down. After that, I'll go out to the garden to sprinkle water on the flowers I have."

"You have flowers here?"

"I told you before that I have a garden," Chris said. "Even though it's weird for somebody like me to do gardening, I care about the outside look of this house. I don't want people to think this place is a dump in the outside… But nobody ever takes a peek at the yard because the fences are a bit too high," he said embarrassed. "My aunt taught me to conserve the flowers by myself."

Lucario thought for a moment. "I'd like to see that garden by myself," he said.

"You're… into flowers?"

"No," Lucario said. "It's just that the atmosphere around flowers is a nice place to relax while meditating…" He looked worried at Chris. "I'm not going to meditate there all the time, but I still want to do some meditation once in a while."

"… Oh, I see," Chris said nodding. "Figures, you being someone who is into meditation…" He chuckled. "I think it was a bit too obvious you'd like to do that in a field like that." He went to the bathroom and closed the door. "Okay, you wait for me in the living room to make breakfast! Don't look outside if there are any people walking by the pavement, okay?"

"Alright," Lucario said before he left the second floor.

After Chris came back to the floor to prepare bacon for breakfast, the teen showed the satisfied Lucario the yard.

Chris smiled at Lucario. "You look very happy," he said. "Did you like to eat bacon?"

"It was certainly much better than the pancakes you served me yesterday," Lucario said pleased. "It tasted so much better to me."

"(Hmm, he liked meat… I wonder if he would like to eat steak later… I don't have steaks though,)" Chris thought, seeing the pleased look on Lucario's face. "(I wonder… Will he grow more confident if I make him food he likes? If that's so… I'll be careful not to make him fat…)" The two stopped in front of the door leading to the yard that was besides the corner of the kitchen. Chris opened it and revealed a set of stairs going down. "Walk down the stairs," Chris said. "It's okay to walk outside."

The Aura Pokémon walked down the stairs as he looked around the yard. The yard itself was large, occupying the right and upper areas around the house. On the top right corner, a small storage was taking the space. Behind the house, the yard had a single yet large tree that reached the third floor easily. Around the fences, there were rows of different flowers arranged, and there were more rows around

the house's walls as well. Lucario looked around the firm grass on the ground as his feet touched it.

Lucario smiled and closed his eyes, feeling the wind brushing against the grass. For a brief moment, he felt as if he was back in his world.

Chris walked down the stairs and stared at Lucario's relieved expression. He smiled at him. "(If he is happy, that gives me more points of confidence with him,)" Chris said. "Your first step into the yard and you feel relaxed already?" he asked.

The Aura Pokémon looked at him. "The air in here is so refreshing," he said. "There is so much life around here."

"Life?" Chris said confused.

"Since I can sense auras, I can sense all auras of living things," Lucario explained. "I just not only detect people's auras, but I can sense flowers, mountains, and even the earth itself. Everything is alive," he said. "But some areas happen to be full of aura, and when they are full of aura, they are also full of life. I get very relaxed when I feel their life."

"Hmm, that's an interesting way to relax…" Chris trailed off.

Lucario looked at the flowers. "Flowers specially have soothing auras. They mostly have a lot of life. I think I've never been so close to them before." He closed his eyes to relax. "It's so nice."

The teen rubbed his chin. "I wonder if I took great care of the flowers to give so much aura energy as you're saying…"

"That would be the case," Lucario said as he sat down on the grass. "I feel very relaxed with the air in here…"

Chris looked away, a little bit jealous that Lucario could sense auras. "Sadly, I don't feel as relaxed as you," he said. "I'd only feel relaxed if

I smell a flower. Hmm… when compared to you, humans have limited ways to relax."

Lucario opened his eyes and looked up at Chris. "Oh no, I still have yet to know more about all the things I haven't experienced yet," he said. "So far, I think I can't do more without someone helping me out."

The teen folded his arms behind his back. "(Is he flattering me? I think so…)" he thought. "Since you enjoy being here, I guess I'll start my work with the flowers," he said. "I just need to water them, though. After that, I'll be done with my duties here."

Lucario looked interested. "How many times do you water them?" he asked.

"I water them every three days," Chris said. "My aunt told me to take great care of the flowers because she was the one who planted them in the first place. And since I like my aunt, I'm going to watch over the flowers… Besides, I told you I don't want people to think I live in a dump."

Lucario shook his head. "Your home doesn't look like a dump to me. You do a very good job in keeping everything in order by yourself," he said.

Chris looked a bit concerned at Lucario's last word. "Oh… Sometimes, I wish there was someone else to help me out," he said before looking at Lucario. "But I can do this just fine."

"…" Lucario stared at Chris's look for a moment.

"… Is something wrong?" Chris asked.

"Oh no, I was just thinking about how I was going to relax here," Lucario said. "You can leave me and go to water the flowers."

"Okay…" Chris said before he walked away to retrieve some gloves from the ground. He then went over to a watering can that he filled with water.

The Aura Pokémon blinked as he saw the teen sprinkling water over the flowers on the yard. Lucario looked up at the bright sun before looking down at the sprinkled flowers that shone with the drops hanging on the petals. He smiled and closed his eyes to sense the radiating aura growing with life.

Chris took a moment to see Lucario sitting in a meditating position. He smiled a bit as he saw the Aura Pokémon sighing in total relaxation. "(And I'd feel much better if he was my Pokémon…)" He looked back at the flowers and sighed. "(I know he isn't legally my Pokémon. He still is under his trainer's ownership. If I went ahead and asked him to be my Pokémon… he'd feel insulted, and he'd probably get very angry… I just know it,)" Chris thought scared. "(As long as he remains here….he is just a guest in my house until I find a way to take back to his world. Of course, I don't know a way… Poor guy…)"

The teen silently sprinkled the flowers with water.

"(… There's no way I can find a way back to his world,)" Chris thought. "(And even if I did… would he be willing to throw away the only opportunity he has to experience a true life? Is he okay to fight and stay inside a Poké Ball all day until he's called out to fight? That's a horrible way to live if he asked me…)"

Chris shook his head and sighed.

"(And here I am, thinking about some video game's mechanics literally ruling over his life… This isn't just fair for him…)" he thought with concern. "(It's either set him free from his eternal imprisonment in my game or I'll get beaten up by him…)"

The Aura Pokémon opened his eyes to see how Chris was doing with the gardening. Lucario saw how Chris's pace slowed down a bit.

"(Is he getting tired?)" Lucario asked. "(Perhaps I should help him out…)" He looked to his right where another watering can lied nearby. He blinked at it and looked back at Chris.

"(I should stop thinking about all that already,)" Chris thought as he sprinkled the flowers with water. "(I'm getting lost in my own thoughts…)"

The sound of a watering can coming from nearby made Chris turn his gaze to the south fence, where Lucario was standing in front of a row of flowers, sprinkling water over them. The Aura Pokémon sensed the teen looking at his way, making him look over his right shoulder at Chris.

"(I'd never thought I'd see a Lucario watering flowers with a watering can before…)" Chris shook his head and looked worried at Lucario. "U-um, it's okay!" Chris said. "I can take care of everything myself!"

"Nonsense," Lucario said. "I want to help you with this."

"A-are you sure of that?" Chris asked.

"I'm sure of that," Lucario said. "To be honest, I feel bad that you're doing the work while I'm just sitting in the middle of the yard doing nothing." He looked at the flowers he was watering. "And… I like to do this a bit."

Chris fell silent. "… You like to water flowers?" he asked.

"I think it's my duty to watch over these flowers," Lucario said. "With the water you're giving them, you're giving them more life. And with more life, their aura grows stronger. Thus, this place becomes much better to relax." He looked at Chris. "Please, let me do this."

"… Okay," Chris said. "If you really want to go ahead…"

"Trust me, I like to do this," Lucario said. "As the Aura Pokémon, I believe I should preserve life for the nature of this place. Besides,

isn't this the only place I can stay besides going out from here?"

The teen looked down for a bit to think about the question. He smiled a bit and nodded to Lucario. "You're right, I guess," he said.

"Thank you," Lucario said before he smiled and turned to the flowers.

Chris's gaze drifted away from Lucario as he watered his flowers. Chris's eyes were still trying to see the Pokémon even though they couldn't fix themselves on him. The teen didn't want to look at Lucario for a while. "(I wonder if I'm discovering his true colors…)" Chris trailed off in thought. "(He seems very nice, actually. Treating flowers as if they were his is a nice thought. Well, his decision was based on his aura abilities… That reminds me… I should ask him some time later about what attacks he knows provided he doesn't destroy anything within my house…)"

Lucario gazed back at Chris. "(I think today was a nice day,)" he thought. "(For some odd reason, I'm starting to feel like I was supposed to live here…)" He shook the thought away as soon he said that. "(W-what am I thinking? I belong to my world. I enjoy my stay here. But… something is telling me that I should see what else I can learn here…)" he stared at Chris, "(and he might be the only one cordial enough to show me all there is to know and do in this world.)"

Half an hour later, Chris and Lucario stood next to the stairs as they looked around the watered flowers. Thanks to the sun, the drops made some small glitters that made Lucario feel their aura cover the yard.

"Well, thank you for your help," Chris said with a smile. "Thanks to you, I finished sooner than expected. And… it seems you look relieved."

Lucario snapped out of his state and looked at Chris. "To the contrary, I should thank you," he said, surprising Chris. "I learned about more stuff today like yesterday."

Chris blushed a bit and looked away for a moment. "Oh… I-I'm glad you're thankful," he said. "Do you feel in home a bit?"

Lucario thought for a moment. "That's hard to say… Even though I'm enjoying my stay here so far… it's going to be a long time before I start calling this my home…" He gasped and shook his head. "I-I mean to say this place is nice as a replacement until I go back to my world someday soon. If I think this is my home, I'd be betraying my trainer's wishes to go back."

The teen looked concerned. "(How much I want to tell him that his life here is so much better than his life in a video game,)" Chris thought worried. "(I need to change the topic here…)"

Chris stared at Lucario for a while.

"… Oh, that's right," Chris said. "All that stuff about auras piqued my interest."

Lucario looked at Chris. "It did?" he asked.

"Yes," Chris said. "Before, I never thought that it was so amazing to sense auras like you do. After hearing you talking about how much aura the flowers radiate and everything else that it made you relax, I'd like to hear more from you later."

Lucario thought for a moment. "(That's an interesting idea… Teaching a human how auras work…) I honestly didn't think about showing someone how auras manifest…" He stared at Chris and smiled a bit. "I suppose I could teach you what to know about auras."

"Really? Thank you!" Chris said relieved. "This is like something you're showing me in return for showing you everything in this world."

"If you think that way, then I'm glad," Lucario said.

"(Nice move,)" Chris thought to himself. "(If I can somehow establish a strong bond with him, he might stop feeling so bad about being here rather than his world. I need to be careful not to make him think I want to own him, though…) But show me about auras later," Chris said. "It's time for us to go back into the house."

"Why?" Lucario asked. "There isn't anyone around the vicinity, and I don't pick any human auras nearby."

The teen looked away. "Oh, I thought you wanted to watch that show we saw yesterday," he said. "You seemed REALLY interested in seeing those battle scenes."

Lucario looked hesitant. "I-it's going to be shown today as well?" he asked.

Chris looked at him and nodded. "Of course, that show always airs five times a week. I've watched all the episodes, and new episodes are about to come soon," he said.

"In that case… I'd like to go watch them again," Lucario said.

Chris chuckled. "A Lucario interested in anime? You really are starting to give me a different look on all Lucarios in general," he said amused.

Lucario blushed. "I… just like to see intense action…" he muttered.

"That's probably because you want to be part of the intense action as well," Chris guessed.

"I admit it… It's like a Pokémon Battle, but without actual Pokémon," Lucario said. "… Can we go now?"

The teen chuckled again and nodded. "Alright, let's go back inside," Chris said. "I've got to think about what to eat for our meal."

The two decided to go back inside the house, leaving the flowers glimmer with the drops that fell to the ground.

The day went on until night came, and Chris was already sleeping in his bed. The Aura Pokémon rested by leaning against the bed, sitting in a meditating position. Lucario opened his eyes and looked outside to the moon as he reflected his thoughts about his new experiences.

"(Chris told me that I should take a shower daily,)" Lucario thought concerned. "(I'd feel a bit stupid doing it every day in the morning, but I don't want to stink… I don't want to stink, so I don't have any choice left… Somehow, it feels nicer to be clean, though. The air smells fresher…)" he thought before blushing. "(… I hope I didn't get used to my own smell all this time… He doesn't know that…)"

Chris mumbled a few words behind his back before falling silent.

Lucario stopped blushing and closed his eyes to relax. "(And thanks to the gardening we did today, the aura surrounding this house feels much more lively than before,)" he thought. "(With an aura like this, I feel so much better… Will it help me to calm down? I went too far in glaring at him for having… that kind of fur I don't want to mention.)" He looked at his fur, which now had returned to its usual sharp look.

The Aura Pokémon looked over his shoulder at the teen's calm look.

Lucario turned back to face his reflection on the TV. He smiled a bit and closed his eyes to sleep. "(I'm sure of only one thing about this world, though…)"

The flowers in the garden, although having lost their drops, radiated with more aura.

"(This world still has a lot for me to see and experience.)"

Originally, Chris and Lucario bonded too much quickly (in a ridiculous record time). But now, an idea has sparked me. This story's new theme should be how the two slowly bond together as time goes by. In the end, this is some kind of battle for Chris to bond

together with Lucario so the latter ultimately decides his decision whether to stay or think of a way to go back to his world.

From this point, the story will start having brand new chapters to prolong further their slow bond. At last, I've seen the theme I originally ignored: the bond.

I encourage everyone to review and to enjoy this story. :)

A Carnivorous Aura Pokémon

To all of those who read the previous version, this chapter is a brand new one. It's probably going to be one of those "cute" moments.

I encourage all readers to read on, enjoy, and review. :)

Chapter 4: A Carnivorous Aura Pokémon

The chirping sounds coming from outside awoke Lucario, who sat next to Chris's bed. The Aura Pokémon yawned as he fixed his gaze outside to the blue sky. He looked back to Chris, who was still sleeping deeply. Lucario blinked a bit before turning back outside where a few birds flew by to the horizon.

"(… Those birds weren't Pokémon, that's for sure…)" Lucario said, recalling how the birds looked so different from a Starly or any other bird-like Pokémon. "(They didn't look so much like any other bird I've seen before… or maybe they're… No, he told me there weren't any Pokémon in this world. I shouldn't get my hopes up with this world's inhabitants.)" He looked down sadly to the floor. "(… I must really stop looking so depressed before he notices. I don't want to make him worry about me.)"

Chris grumbled a few words as he slowly woke up, seeing Lucario looking down on the floor. The Aura Pokémon pulled back his head and looked at him. "Good morning, Lucario," Chris said.

"Good morning," Lucario said.

"Well…" Chris said as he yawned a bit, "this is your fourth day ever since you came to this place… Are you finding your stance here enjoyable so far?"

"Oh, yes," Lucario said. "You don't need to worry about so much."

"That… I can't do," Chris said skeptically. "I still need to look after you so you don't mess up. You've been here for four days now, but it's just too soon to leave you roam my house on your own."

Lucario looked away. "I suppose you're right…" he muttered.

Chris sat up from his bed and embraced his knees. "With that settled, you need to take another shower," he said.

The Aura Pokémon blinked at this and turned to the teen. "A-another shower?" he asked.

"Well, yes, you have to take a shower daily," Chris said mildly upset. "You don't expect to be clean for three days after taking a bath, do you?"

"I… thought it was that way."

"Sorry, but no," Chris said. "You'll still start stinking after you wake up. You need to keep yourself clean every single day to be… well, clean," he said. "Besides, it's much better if you get out of the bathroom. You'll feel really nice after a bath."

Lucario smiled a bit. "I do remember feeling so nice after taking a shower," he said. "It felt so nice."

"Alright," Chris said, sitting on the side of his bed. "You go take a shower in the second floor while I go ahead and make breakfast for us. I'll take a shower after I eat."

Lucario sighed and walked out from the room towards the second floor. While he did this, the teen made sure that he went upstairs. "(I did notice that look he had when I was waking up…)" Chris thought worried. "(Is he still lamenting the fact he's stuck in this world? If that's so… that will make him feel so melancholic all over again…)"

The teen looked outside to think what to do.

After half an hour, Chris and Lucario were sitting together in the living room, having scrambled eggs for breakfast. The Aura Pokémon found the new dish to be tasty. The teen watched as Lucario ate his scrambled eggs, looking relaxed when he closed his eyes to chew his food in his mouth.

"(That look he's doing is so nice to see,)" Chris thought to himself. "(He never had the opportunity to eat scrambled eggs before. I can tell that very well.)"

"Hmmmm," Lucario mumbled pleased as he ate his scrambled eggs.

The teen stared intently at the Aura Pokémon for a long a while. Something about Lucario's happy look for eating breakfast made Chris realize that there was a way to please him more.

"(… I wonder… Will I make good progress with him if I made more food for him to eat?)" Chris wondered. "(They do say that using food is a nice way to show hospitality to others. Will this work with him?)"

Lucario chewed his food before he noticed Chris was staring blankly at him. The Aura Pokémon felt a bit awkward after the teen didn't react at all. "Uh… um… is something I'm doing wrong now?" Lucario asked, breaking the uncomfortable silence in the living room.

"… Oh, what? Oh no, no," Chris said embarrassed. "I was just daydreaming about some stuff after I saw how happy you looked when you were eating your breakfast."

"(He isn't thinking about some odd stuff about me, is he?)" Lucario thought worried. "Well… yes, I like these… scrambled eggs," he said, forcing a smile. "I never ate something like this before. I'm grateful you gave me this for the morning."

Chris forced a smile next. "I'm glad you like them," he said. "Since you haven't eaten these kinds of dishes before, maybe I should give you more food this afternoon."

"There's more?"

"Of course there's more," Chris said. "There are so many dishes that I haven't eaten before, but I still got to eat many kinds of them. Are you familiar with… meat?"

"Not that much…" Lucario said. "I never got to taste meat in my life."

"Would you like to eat some steaks later this afternoon?" Chris asked. "I think you'll like eating them better than anything else."

"… Go ahead," Lucario said. "As long as it's edible…"

"Don't worry about that," Chris said as he pushed his plate aside and stood up away from his chair. "It'll be very edible, that's for sure. I'm going to go upstairs and take a shower for now, though."

"I'll see you later," Lucario said.

"Wait for me in the couch," Chris said. "You can watch TV if you want."

Lucario nodded as the teen made his way upstairs to the bathroom. The Aura Pokémon put his plate aside and pushed his chair to stand up and stretch his arms. After doing so, Lucario walked back to the living room and sat down on the couch. He rested his arms on his knees as his mind wandered off in thoughts about what would be shown to him today.

"… I trust that he won't humiliate me in some way," Lucario muttered to himself. "So far, nothing has gone wrong…"

Deciding to distract himself, Lucario picked up the remote control and turned on the TV. His crimson eyes stared intently at the epic battles that were shown on the screen.

Hours later…

An unimaginable scent wafted along the air in the living room. The same scent went all the way to Lucario's nose, who mumbled some pleased grunts. Just by smelling the succulent smell of meat being cooked over a frying pan from the kitchen made his stomach beg for food. It was just as if he had been ignoring the best kind of food he couldn't get to lay a fang on it. As time passed, his stomach kept growling and growling without him getting embarrassed about it. The scent was so strong that it even made his mouth get full of water.

The smell of meat was just too much for him to handle. Lucario didn't know that he could find a liking to meat food.

Lucario looked back all the way to the kitchen where he saw Chris cooking up some steaks over a frying pan. While he couldn't make out the steaks' texture from his spot, their scent was good enough to make him think that they were destined to be digested inside his stomach. The only thing he wished to do now is eat whatever Chris was making for the two.

"It's going to be ready in two minutes!" Chris called over without turning to Lucario. "You should sit down in your seat now!"

Lucario took Chris's words as some sort of order that he needed to follow for his benefit. Briefly, the Aura Pokémon snapped out and found himself stopping midway to the chair. "(Is he trying to control me with food?)" Lucario thought embarrassed. "(How long am I going to fall for this world's wonders?)"

And the scent of meat softly soothing his nose told him otherwise.

"(… Oh no, I shouldn't be thinking like that at all,)" Lucario said, shaking his head to fight the scent to no avail. "(The scent is… is just too… too good for me to ignore… Concentrate… I just need to get over the smell and eat whatever he wants me to eat…)"

Lucario couldn't tell that he was submitted to his own temptation. He unknowingly sat down on his chair, the scent making his stomach growl. Again, thanks to the smell, he mumbled some words. His

nose suddenly started to smell the scent, telling it was getting strong and stronger. As if he was forced to turn his head towards the kitchen by some unknown force, Lucario saw Chris carrying some fresh steaks over a big plate.

Lucario's eyes instantly fixed on the brown meat. He could see the true scent wafting off from the top. His mount started watering inside without his consent. As Chris brought the plate over the table, Lucario's crimson eyes fixed on it like they were having some kind of vendetta on the meat.

Chris sat down on his seat and saw the blank expression Lucario had on the meat set in front of them. The teen looked down, seeing the Aura Pokémon's chest breathing in and out at a rather fast pace. "… Are you… feeling okay?" Chris asked.

The Aura Pokémon was called back to his senses, turning to Chris. "I-I'm fine," he said. "Was I distracted just now?"

"I'd… say so," Chris responded. "You were staring into the meat for quite a long time…"

Lucario quickly turned his head to the meat over the big plate, as if Chris's words sounded like a warning that the meat disappeared or something. "… I'll be honest," he said without giving Chris a look. "The smell of the meat is… is really refreshing and appetizing to me," he admitted embarrassed.

"(In other words, he likes it!)" Chris cheered triumphantly in his mind. Without hesitation, he chuckled and said, "Well, go ahead and eat as much as you like. It's better when it's warm."

Lucario didn't do a thing as Chris offered himself to hand over two steaks to his plate. The Aura Pokémon's eyes were totally focused on the steaks, thinking the steaks had some kind of power that forced him to focus on them. With the scent now filling the air right under his nose, Lucario couldn't avoid inhaling the scent, letting a

very pleased mumble by accident. He opened his eyes in shock, looking at Chris. "I-I'm sorry if I sounded weird…" he muttered.

Chris chuckled a bit. "Oh, don't worry about it," he said. "I expected you to do that after you said you liked the smell."

The teen could have sworn the Aura Pokémon blushed slightly. "Can we just eat now?" he asked mildly upset. "I'm feeling so awkward right now…"

"Right, just be careful because they have bones in them," Chris said as he calmly began to cut his steak to pieces with a knife, using a fork to bring a piece to his mouth.

Lucario saw the relieved expression Chris made whenever he ate a piece of meat. Looking back down to his plate, Lucario calmly grabbed his knife and fork. Having learned how to hold his utensils from Chris, Lucario slowly and carefully started to cut his steak. He chipped off a piece that he impaled with his fork. He felt his mouth watering even more as he slowly brought the piece of meat to his mouth.

And after taking a small bite of it, Lucario's eyes shot wide open.

After the meat touched his tongue, Lucario felt that he was taken to the heaven. His eyes slowly closed as he savored the meat inside his mouth. He chewed on it, spreading the unbelievable and tasty treat across his sharp fangs. Surely, he thought, the meat's taste easily overwhelmed any kind of Oran Berry he used to eat. The taste would even easily defeat a Sitrus Berry's flavor. Lucario never thought there was going to be something so powerful in taste like a small piece of meat. Chris stopped eating once he heard the satisfied Pokémon mumbling happily to himself. He noticed how Lucario rose up his chin while looking relieved. The teen blinked a few times at this, smiling a bit as he went back to eat.

As time went by, Chris couldn't help but notice the Aura Pokémon began eating at a faster pace until he settled down with a calm and

collected look to enjoy fully every single piece of meat he brought to his mouth. It was not long before his pleased mumbles grew louder and louder, causing Chris to think that there was some kind of big lion standing right next to him who was about to leap on his back and bite his head off.

"(Oh my god… Is it just me, or is he sounding a little bit too wild with all those mumbling sounds he's making?)" Chris thought with some fear, seeing how Lucario continued to eat his steaks happily. "(I-I know I found out he likes to eat meat, but this is a little bit too much from what I expected from him…)"

Chris nearly hopped from his seat once he noticed there was something wrong with Lucario. The teen looked back to the Pokémon's plate, completely clean from any meat. However, this was not the case for Chris to look dismayed. It was the fact that Lucario was *eating* a whole bone that was inside the steak. Chris didn't think Lucario would go so far as to eat the bone, but it was a scary sight to see because of the fact Chris could spot Lucario's sharp fangs easily breaking the bone apart as if it was some kind of candy. Moreover, a single bite from the Aura Pokémon's sharp fangs was enough to break parts of the bone he held with one hand.

"(No way…)" Chris said in disbelief. "(I know dogs like to bite on bones to eat them, but… he's literally breaking the whole bone with small bites! What's more, he *is* eating a bone, for god's sake! I thought he was going to leave it alone and go for another steak!)"

Deciding that it was awkward to see the tall Pokémon obliterating the unlucky bone with his sharp fangs, Chris tapped on Lucario's shoulder.

And all that he received as a reply was an angry growl from Lucario, who glared at Chris without thinking.

Chris yelped at this and nearly fell back from his seat. His reaction made Lucario come back to his senses, gasping aloud after recalling

what he did. "I-I'm sorry!" Lucario apologized as Chris pulled himself back to his seat to avoid falling off. "I-I didn't know what I was doing!"

Chris looked a little bit scared at Lucario, who in turn felt stupid. "I-I think I shouldn't have interrupted you," Chris said. "I-I'm the one who should be sorry for it."

"N-no, no, it's my fault," Lucario apologized. "I don't know what was happening to me after I started biting that bone… I… I just went along with the flow and started tearing it apart with my teeth…"

"F-fangs, you mean…" Chris corrected.

"Y-yes," Lucario said, still sounding ashamed. "Please, don't be scared. It was a mistake done by my part… for growling at you without thinking…"

Chris gulped and leaned back to his seat. "I thought you really were going to punch me for real this time…" he muttered. "Seriously, I don't want to think about you hurting me because, well… you're technically far stronger than any normal person out there."

"(Oh no, what did I just do?)" Lucario thought dismayed. "(One mistake I do always leads him to think I'm going to hurt him… Am I that violent?)" He shook his head and looked ashamed at Chris. "Please, forgive me for being so rude… I'm going to be more careful next time. I promise."

"(How can I trust him that he won't do the same mistake?)" Chris thought worried. "(It's me who's making him get angry…)" he thought before he shook his head and sighed in relief. "I forgive you, so don't worry," Chris apologized. "After all, you still need to get used to this world, am I right?"

"I suppose so…" Lucario trailed off, before the scent of the steaks in front of them soothed his nose. Soon, he sighed in pleasure as he savored the smell.

Chris blinked at this before he chuckled heartily, something Lucario made react angry.

However, deep down, Lucario had a feeling that told him to laugh together with the teen. Unfortunately, his mood got the better of him, and he just grunted silently to himself so Chris wouldn't hear him. He did, however, stifled the grunt after Chris opened his eyes and resumed eating his plate. The teen, once again, gave Lucario another steak, which somehow forced him to eat and mumble happily, forgetting what had happened between the two.

After a while, all plates were empty while Lucario leaned back to his seat, shattering a small piece of bone with his sharp fangs that went down his throat and hit his full stomach. He let out a pleased sigh, putting his hands over his lap. Chris had just finished his plate, seeing Lucario resting against his chair. "Were you satisfied?" Chris asked.

Lucario turned to him and nodded. "Yes," he said with a happy look. "This was by far the best meal I've ever eaten thanks to you."

Chris mimicked the same happy look as a sign of affection. "I'm so glad you enjoyed it. Your look says that pretty well," he said.

Lucario gasped mentally as he changed his happy look for a blank look. He looked away embarrassed. "Y-yes, you like you said…" he muttered.

The teen tilted his head confused. "Is something else bothering you now?"

"No, it's nothing," Lucario said without turning to Chris.

"… Alright," Chris said, picking the plates and utensils to bring them to the kitchen.

As the teen left the table, Lucario was puzzling himself with the fact that he gave the teen a happy look. That, and the fact that he wanted

to laugh with him, made Lucario think that he was slowly forgetting his trainer whom he was very fond. "(I need to stop doing this…)" Lucario thought. "(If I keep showing happiness to him, will I eventually forget my trainer? Is he trying to make me submit to his world? There's only one way for me to know without having to ask him directly…)"

The only way to clear his thoughts was reading Chris's own mind. The Aura Pokémon glowed ominously as he turned to look at Chris, who was cleaning the plates at the time.

"(I knew he was going to like eating steaks,)" Chris thought in a cheerful mood. "(Somehow, I think I'm doing a pretty good job to make him feel more at home so that he doesn't feel so bad about being here. But… I wonder how long this will go like this…)" he wondered worried. "(It's just too soon for him to get used to this world, I admit… Am I doing a good job, really? I shouldn't be thinking that he would become my Pokémon or something stupid like that. I mean, he is already owned by someone else than me…)"

Lucario noticed that Chris stopped cleaning for a moment before he resumed.

"(… No, don't you dare think you can just make him be your Pokémon,)" Chris thought seriously. "(You can't just grab him for yourself while he's so confused of what is going on in his life. It's… too tempting to do that, but that's not right at all. I'll just have to live with the truth until I find some way to make him go back to his world… assuming I can find one with what I have… For now, I'll hang in there with him. My job now is to make him feel at home, and that's all I'll ever do for him. Yes, just like that…)"

Lucario looked worried as his body made the aura disappear. He blinked a few times and looked down to the floor. "(Even he is struggling to think about what to do with me… I can't find any selfish intentions. His aura is blue, so he's not a bad person with malicious thoughts…)" He looked up to the ceiling. "(But even so, I can't put

my full trust to my aura. Only time will tell me what to do while I'm here…)"

Soon, Chris came back from the kitchen, making Lucario look at him. The Aura Pokémon stood up and looked down a bit at the teen. "Well, I don't know what to do," Chris said. "I don't have any chores to do."

"Really?" Lucario asked.

"I'm pretty much free today, so yes," Chris said. "Maybe I should use this time to teach you something else?"

"Oh, yes, please do," Lucario said with an apologetic look. "Think of this as some way to excuse me from growling at you."

"Well… if that's what you wish," Chris said, rubbing his chin. "I still don't know what to do…"

It was then that Chris fixed his look to Lucario's mouth. A single piece of meat was still hanging on to his lips. Noticing this, Lucario touched his lips until he sucked up the little strand of meat inside, briefly chewing it with his fangs. Chris spotted Lucario's fangs. "Oh yes, now that I think about it, you need to have dental hygiene."

"Dental… hygiene?" Lucario wondered.

"Um, yes, think like having a bath, but instead, you clean your mouth and teeth… I mean, fangs," Chris said. "Are you up to cleaning your fangs?"

"… I guess," Lucario said confused.

"First, let me see if you really need to clean your fangs," Chris said. "Okay, open up your mouth."

Lucario shrugged. "I feel uncomfortable now," he said.

"I'm not going to insert my hands in your mouth, if that's what you're thinking," Chris said disgusted. "I just need you to show me your fangs for a little bit… and if you would, smell your breath to see if it's not stinky."

Lucario looked upset at the part mentioning his breath, but he opened his mouth wide open.

Chris looked particularly intimidated. From a distance, he would always find four sharp fangs every time Lucario spoke. But from a short view, Chris found out that there were rows of small, sharp-looking fangs extending in and out from the four larger fangs. "(Gosh, no wonder why those bones he ate were easily turned into crumbles. Those sharps fangs he has look exactly the same from each other… and they look extremely sharp…)" he thought, spotting some little remnants of meat stuck between some of the fangs.

"Are you done?" Lucario asked.

"N-not yet," Chris said. "Now, I need you to exhale slowly."

Lucario did so.

And Chris felt that he was being tortured. Lucario's breath was, in a few words, plain down horrible. His breath smelled as if a dead rat's corpse was being kept inside his throat, and there were probably even more ways to define the horrendous bad breath that Lucario was letting dwell inside his mouth for a place to call home.

"Sweet mother of…" Chris muttered, stepping back to survive with the fresh air he was able to inhale, away from the Pokémon's bad breath.

Lucario closed his mouth, looking clueless to why Chris was gagging a bit. "U-uh…" he trailed off. "… Is something wrong?"

"O-oh," Chris gagged, "I wouldn't say something is wrong when that something smells nasty," he said. "I-in fact, it is… horrendous. Your

breath stinks like a dead corpse of something close to it was being kept inside your mouth…"

Lucario, again, looked upset. "That is very ridiculous to compare my breath to a dead corpse," he said, crossing his arms. "I'm sorry, but I'll take that as an insult this time."

Chris looked worried. "Well, if you're so sure, then go ahead and see what I mean. Smell your breath."

Lucario did so.

"…" The Aura Pokémon felt that his consciousness was slowly leaving him. His own breath was just too much for his nose to handle.

Chris looked bored, making Lucario snap out from his state to look apologetic at the teen. "… So?"

"… I want to get rid of this unbelievable breath… please…" Lucario muttered embarrassed.

"You and Mr. Toothpaste will get along *just* fine," Chris said with emphasis.

"… You're introducing me to someone else already?" Lucario asked. "I thought I wasn't supposed t-"

"I was using figurative speech there, you know."

"… I feel stupid."

Chris sighed. "Let's go back to the bathroom again…" he instructed. "That's where I'll teach you how to clean your fangs… Hmm, I wonder if there are any 'Fangpaste' for your fangs?" he joked a bit while Lucario simply sighed.

After taking Lucario to the bathroom where he was told about how to use toothpaste together with a blue tooth brusher, the Aura Pokémon

was left to do anything inside the bathroom as he stared at his reflection on the mirror over the washbowl. He opened his mouth to spot the little strands of meat stuck between his fangs.

"(What was I thinking, going around with meat stuck there?)" Lucario thought dismayed. "(At least I know you're not supposed to have something stuck between your teeth when you're talking…)"

Looking at his tooth brush, the Aura Pokémon started cleaning his fangs.

Later that night…

"For the last time, Lucario, you have to clean your fangs three times a day," Chris said as he lied down on his bed, as Lucario tried to get the concept of cleaning after yourself. "Each one of them is done after each meal you have."

"Oh… so that's why you always went to the bathroom every time you ate," Lucario said, sitting down on the floor next to the bed.

"What were you thinking before you learned this, then?"

"I was thinking you were taking a shower three times a day instead…"

"… If I did, my skin would turn really white."

"… That was figurative speech this time, right?"

"Oh, good, you're starting to grasp the concept," Chris said relieved.

Lucario sighed and looked away. "… Chris, tell me something," he muttered ashamed. "Am I… pathetic to you?"

"N-no, no, no! You're not pathetic!" Chris tried to correct. "W-why are you asking that all of a sudden?"

"Because I think I'm very clueless about everything a normal person knows commonly," Lucario said worried. "It's been a short while, but… I'm starting to think I wasn't meant to know about this world's culture that much and I were meant to be just a wild Pokémon."

Chris shook his head disapprovingly. "That's not true," he said. "Lucario, I truly believe that you have… potential to do more."

"… Do I…" he muttered in a downcast mood.

"You and many other Pokémon have the same potential," Chris said, sitting on his bed. "It's just that there was never some kind of Pokémon who does this kind of thing, but… let me ask you this."

Lucario turned to him. "Go ahead and ask me…"

"Were you able to do all the stuff I showed you all these past three days?"

"… Yes, but I screwed up a bit in each one of them," Lucario said.

"It doesn't really matter," Chris said seriously. "It's not like you're going to succeed right after doing it the first time. Like I said before, you just need to get used to this. Are you telling me that you haven't enjoyed all this so far?"

"I sure did…" Lucario trailed off.

Chris chuckled heartily. "Then there's no reason for you to be so depressed," he said, rubbing Lucario's head between his ears. "So please, don't worry because there's so much to show you later on."

Lucario blinked shocked as he saw Chris rubbing his head. The teen noticed what he was doing and gasped, drawing back his hand to his side. "…"

"I-I'm sorry for that, really, I'm sorry!" Chris apologized. "I-I got carried away, I swear!"

"… It's okay," Lucario said with a sigh. "Please, don't get so worked up over that."

The teen couldn't believe what the Aura Pokémon told him. Chris's action was sure about to spark a little growl from Lucario, but Chris never thought Lucario would just shrug it off. "(Maybe he's slowly opening up? Nah, it can't be. It's too fast for him to do that…)" Chris thought before he yawned, lying down on his bed. "Well… thank you, Lucario."

"You're welcome, Chris," Lucario said apologetically. "… Do I still need to clean my fangs three times a day?"

"… Yes, do that so your fangs don't look yellow," Chris muttered. "Good night…" he muttered softly, drifting off to sleep.

The Aura Pokémon made sure that the teen was sleeping deeply. Once he did, Lucario leaned his back to the bed and looked outside to the night sky. Looking at the moon and the stars, he smiled a bit to himself. "(It felt nice when he rubbed my head…)" he thought before he gasped mentally. "(W-why did I think that just now? My temptations are taking over my own decisions… but… I wouldn't say they are temptations because I enjoy what he's doing for me…)"

Lucario kept pondering about all the things he was going to learn in the incoming days. Drifting off to sleep, the Aura Pokémon smiled, regardless about the times where he reacted violently against Chris.

Somehow, he thought, he was going to behave much better from now on. The only thing Lucario needed was to have optimism. And Chris would certainly enjoy an optimistic look coming from him.

The night went on as Lucario smiled a bit during his sleep…

I hope everyone enjoyed this brand new chapter. I have nothing else to say other that the fact I enjoyed writing this one.

I encourage all readers to review. :)

A Gamer is Born

Like the previous chapter, this chapter is a brand new one.

I encourage all readers to read on, enjoy, and review. :)

Chapter 5: A Gamer is Born

Another morning light shone down from the window of the room, hitting the Aura Pokémon's face. Lucario opened his eyes after feeling the warm light. He blinked a few times until looking around the room. His fifth day in the real world had something new in store for him, he could tell that much.

But as long as Chris was sleeping behind his back, nothing new would show up his way. Lucario looked over his shoulder where Chris was still sleeping peacefully. One look at the young teen's face convinced Lucario that Chris meant no harm with the pure look he showed during his sleep. "(I wonder if I've being very rude to him…)" Lucario thought. "(There are no dark thoughts in his mind at all, yet I keep thinking he has something in hands for me. Am I just being paranoid for no reason? Maybe that's what wrong with me…)"

Lucario kept staring at Chris for a long while until he blinked and looked away, not wanting to disturb Chris from his sleep. The Aura Pokémon didn't want to leave the room behind because he feared that he would unconditionally cause some kind of issue in the house. He was restricted to go out as well, no matter how much he wanted to go back to the garden outside and feel the earth's life. All he could do for now was to wait for Chris to wake up and start the day.

But all changed when he decided to have a small look around the room. His eyes wandered around the room's furniture. Lucario never paid too much attention to all the memorabilia that Chris had around. He was interested to know more about the posters that were hanging

on the walls, almost completely covering the white paint underneath them.

The posters showed a wide array of people Lucario never met before. He saw big-nosed plumbers and pink princesses, characters that had animal-like characteristics with human shapes, pink puffballs and masked puffballs, swordsmen and mystical creatures, and sometimes a big mixture of all of them. What were more interesting were the posters that showed Pokémon that Lucario barely knew about, mainly because many of those Pokémon weren't native to the Sinnoh region.

"(Dialga and Palkia?)" Lucario thought shocked after seeing the images of both deities right next to each other. "(Those are the deities of Sinnoh… my homeland,)" he thought.

Lucario started to have questions to ask Chris. The Aura Pokémon was still shocked that everything he knew was part of a video game. It was so hard to believe that many people in the real world knew so much about different people inside the games that it was almost frightening. Lucario even thought that Chris monitored his every move from across a small screen, but it didn't feel that way.

"(All the Pokémon I know are… puppets to these humans?)" Lucario thought, looking back at Chris. "(But he doesn't treat me like a puppet…)"

Lucario blinked shocked and looked forward, realizing that he was letting his doubts get the better of him again. He hung down his head and shut his eyes.

"(There I go again, having some upsetting thoughts about Chris…)" Lucario thought ashamed, looking away. "(They will keep coming back to me the more I wonder about the unbelievable findings of this world…)"

Lucario looked up from his spot, staring beside the television in front of him. His crimson eyes fixed on top of the drawer where a weird,

white machine idly sat. Right below the weird-looking machine, there was another black machine that was a little larger than the one on top of it. Next to the machines, there were sets of controllers displayed neatly. Lucario's eyes wandered more to the left where he found big piles of boxes.

He was curious to see what those boxes had inside of them, and he even wanted to know why Chris had so many. Lucario looked back at Chris still sleeping on his bed. Calmly, Lucario stood up from his spot and moved his tail away from touching the teen. He looked back to the piles and walked to them. When he reached them, he lifted one small box carefully to see what it had on the cover.

The box he had picked was kind of thick. The cover showed two young men looking away from each other while a young woman looked forward. Behind them, there stood some kind of woman with a dress that left no imagination left for fashion designers.

Lucario blinked and tilted his head confused. He then wondered if there was something on the back. He flipped the box around where one of the men he saw was standing next to a description box and some images. The Aura Pokémon, however, wasn't smart enough to be able to read like humans did. "(What is this, some kind of… novel that humans like to read?)" he asked, tilting his head as he tried to read the description.

The Aura Pokémon set the box back to the pile carefully. He, however, kept staring at the box. He recalled what he saw, and he couldn't help feeling interested on what he had tried to read. Lucario was curious to know about the box's little story. He would have liked to see more action himself, but the curiosity was keeping him interested.

"(… I want to see more of this,)" Lucario resolved in his mind. "(What are those mysterious dreams?)"

It was then that Lucario slowly realized that his interest to know more about the box's contents had some kind of explanation to why the

real world's humans were interested in many things. That small description caught Lucario's attention so much that he wanted to see more. He took the box once more and found out he could open it from the side. Slowly opening it, he found a set of four different discs in them, each one depicting parts in a sequence while barely showing a character facing Lucario on the discs' covers.

Unbeknownst to Lucario, Chris was awakening. The teen made no sounds but merely opened his eyes. He looked around before finding Lucario standing next to his piles of video games. "… Lucario?" Chris wondered.

Lucario got startled and closed the box quickly, putting it back to its position. He turned around and carefully moved his tail away so that it wouldn't recklessly hit the pile to look at Chris. "U-uh, good morning," Lucario greeted nervously.

"Don't think I didn't see you," Chris said blankly, yawning a bit. "You were checking out my video games, weren't you?"

"V-video games?" Lucario repeated, looking away as his cheeks blushed a bit. "I… I…" he stammered, feeling guilty.

The teen stared at the Aura Pokémon for a while until Chris sat up from his bed. He rubbed his chin with a finger. "… Hmm, I wonder if you…"

Lucario gulped.

"… I wonder if you finally decided to look at those boxes I have there," Chris said, confusing Lucario. "I swear that those piles would really stand out from all the stuff I have inside my room… Well, the posters also count, so…"

Lucario looked back at the pile of video games then looked back at Chris.

Chris forced a small smile and stood up. "I know that you're still a bit fazed about you being from a video game. But don't you want to find out why I'm so interested in them?" he asked.

The Aura Pokémon looked at the box he picked up early. Feeling embarrassed, he asked Chris, "Can you show me… what this video game has? I-it's the one I picked up first, and I got interested to see it…"

Chris walked to the box Lucario was looking at. The teen hid his mouth and then picked the box. "Oh, no way," Chris said, looking interested to Lucario. "I can't believe you decided to look at this game first than all the other ones I have! It's… like a miracle!"

Lucario didn't quite understand what Chris was trying to say. "What do you mean?" Lucario asked.

Chris showed Lucario the box. "Before I get any crazy ideas, what made you get interested in this game?" he asked.

"Well… I can't read, but I grew interested in seeing these persons facing away from each other…" Lucario trailed off embarrassed. "I want to know the story of it all."

Chris gapped his mouth for a bit. "Are you telling me you want to know more about this for real?" he asked as if Lucario was crazy and demented.

"I didn't mind the reading that much… but I do hope to learn how to read," Lucario admitted. "Did I do something wrong?"

"N-no, not at all!" Chris said calming himself down. "You're interested to learn the story?"

"I guess?" Lucario said nervous.

"…" Chris clasped his hands and looked up to the ceiling. "Thank you, you blessed me and gave me a true fanatic," he thanked. "A

very, VERY unlikely fanatic…"

Lucario was confused to Chris's move that he looked up and saw nothing on the ceiling. He looked back down to Chris. "Are you feeling okay?" Lucario asked confused.

"… Oh, what?" Chris snapped out from his senses. "Y-yes, I'm alright. D-do you want to see this video game with me now?"

Lucario nodded with a blank look on his face. "Sure, I don't mind if you don't have anything else to do. What's the worst thing that could happen?" he asked.

A couple of hours later…

Lucario's blank look was intact as he was sitting down beside Chris, but that didn't stop him from taking off his eyes from the television as Chris played through the game himself. It was hard to tell, but Lucario liked everything that he was watching. He was mesmerized by the depth in the story, astonished at the battle scenes that were part of the game, wonderfully pleased at the pleasant music that enchanted his ears (which he actually liked a lot), and deeply moved by the characters portrayed. Chris took it upon himself to read everything, which caused the aura wielder to really want to try learning how to read by himself soon.

The Aura Pokémon found out that he became some sort of fanatic at first sight, and he could tell why Chris liked to play video games so much.

"I decided to start a new file because I wanted to *live* the game again… and get everything I missed," Chris commented.

"How does one *live* a video game?" Lucario asked.

"Don't you feel that you're helping the characters getting around dangerous situations? That's how you *live* the game. You appreciate it for its incredible depth. In return, you get to see more about it."

If only Lucario could get a hold of the controller on Chris's hands, he would probably understand the feeling. "I see…" Lucario trailed off.

Chris took his eyes off the screen to look at Lucario, who seemed to be entertained from a small cutscene rendered in full CGI. Wondering about something, Chris told Lucario, "I'm getting tired. I need to go take a bath…"

Lucario turned to Chris. "So soon?" he asked in a depressed tone. "I wanted to see more of this… video game."

Chris's doubts were answered. He looked up to the ceiling with a wide smile. "(… Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god,)" Chris repeatedly thought while beaming in glee. "(This has to be some kind of miracle. This Lucario of ALL people is… is… a video game fanatic! N-no, I literally turned him into one! I did the unthinkable!)"

Lucario looked worried at the television before his look turned blank again, mesmerized once another random battle encounter had begun in the game. Chris looked down and let go of his shoulders a bit, smiling at the curious Lucario. "I want to see how you do in this fight," Lucario said. "Is there more to this story? I want to know more."

The teen thanked god so much that he would forever be indebted.

"W-well, if you really want to see more, then I think we can delay our time to go to bath," Chris said, pleasing Lucario in the process. "Let's see… Ooh, we're close to a boss fight."

"A boss fight?" Lucario wondered. "What is a boss fight?"

"Imagine a strong monster that needs you to make a strategy so that it can be defeated and then you'll get the idea."

Chris never noticed that Lucario moved his face closer to the television, apparently waiting to see the boss fight.

"After this, we're going to take a shower one after the other," Chris said.

"You're not going to keep playing anymore?" Lucario asked, once again, depressed.

Chris wondered that he could get even closer with Lucario this time around. There were no possible moments where the Aura Pokémon would snap out angrily. If this was Chris's chance to foster a better relationship, he knew he had to take it now. "(Do it so he likes you more…)… I can make an exception and keep playing after taking a bath and eating breakfast," Chris said.

"(Do I have to wait that long?)" Lucario asked dismayed. "I… I see," he said.

Chris knew he struck gold together with oil.

Surprisingly, the day went very fast. Lucario never noticed that time flew by the longer he stayed staring at Chris playing a video game. It was morning a few seconds ago, and then it was afternoon some minutes ago until night arrived. When Lucario took off his eyes from the television for one moment, he gasped when he saw the night's sky through the window of the room.

"(This is horrible… Have I been distracted by this so much that I never noticed how much time I lost?)" Lucario thought bewildered.

But once he glanced back to the television where Chris had entered another boss fight, Lucario forgot all about the mental shock and went back to stare more. Lucario wondered about why Chris was able to keep playing for a long period of time without getting tired at all. Then he realized that video games had some kind of effect in people that allowed them to keep playing nonstop. It was no wonder why they had many interesting features in them.

For Lucario's dismay, Chris was already getting tired. "I think I got too excited today that I let the whole day fly by… Not that I can

complain," he said chuckling as he saved his game file and turned the console off. "I do this a lot, anyway."

"It's over?" Lucario asked depressed.

Chris turned to Lucario. "Sorry, but I think I played this a little bit too much today," he said. "Besides, I already know what happens in this game in the end."

Lucario was shocked that his experience had an ending. Chris noticed the depressed look on his face that he felt sorry for Lucario.

"… We can continue tomorrow if you like," Chris said, shocking Lucario. "Heheh, I'd never thought that would end up enjoying video games."

Lucario looked away embarrassed. "I… I admit I like them… just a bit," he muttered the last part.

"I saw how you never took off your eyes from the game," Chris pointed out. "It's like you can't look at anything else rather than the TV. And also, you appreciate the game besides just the gameplay… just… like I do too."

Lucario stared at Chris for a while. "Isn't it normal for other people to do the same thing as we do?" he asked.

Chris looked away with a bored look. "Nowadays, gamers make games look overrated because they never have the guts to step on to other genres. They like gameplay over anything else that games trying to deliver like, say, an important message for people." He looked at Lucario. "But you're… you're a true gamer fanatic, and I think we got something in common with that. Well, I never expected you to show me this side."

Lucario didn't want to admit that he was a gamer fanatic. "Is it… bad that I share something in common with you?" he asked.

"What are you saying? That makes you more awesome!" Chris rejoiced. "The mere thought of a gamer Lucario never crossed my mind a single time, but you're a really special case that it's incredibly amazing to see with my own eyes!"

The teen blushed after realizing what he said while the Aura Pokémon stared shocked at him. For a brief moment, Lucario felt flattered by the remarks Chris said to him. The Aura Pokémon looked away with a small smile, feeling a bit proud. It felt very good to Lucario that he was admired in such a way.

"I-I'm sorry for suddenly bursting out like that…" Chris said embarrassed. "I got too excited with you."

"It's okay," Lucario said. "I'm glad I… excited you like that."

Lucario wasn't kidding. He was happy that Chris called him awesome, but then Lucario's loyalty to his real trainer kicked in, making him feel a bit horrified that he liked someone else.

"I-I won't do it again. I REALLY feel embarrassed…" Chris trailed off, looking at the clock. "It's still a little bit too early to rest and I feel a little hungry. Do you want to have dinner?"

Lucario stood up from his spot and nodded.

"I've got great news. We still have some leftovers from the steak we ate yesterday."

The word "steak" was so stuck on Lucario's mind that he couldn't wait to taste the meat once more. He reminded himself not to snap out at Chris if he tapped his shoulder. "Let's go to eat," Lucario said a little excited.

As the two walked down the hallway, Chris smiled to himself. "(This day started off very good and ended in a good note. I'm making a really nice progress this time… I need to keep this up tomorrow. I

wonder if I can make him… play video games? It's possible, and I know that will give me a lot of points with him.)"

With a new idea in mind, Chris waited for tomorrow and see if his plan would help Lucario to grow closer to him and, hopefully, make the Aura Pokémon feel at home.

"(I better be careful and not think this place is any better than my homeland,)" Lucario thought. "(I… I will stay loyal to my real trainer forever…)"

The next chapter will continue with Chris's plan, meaning that it will be a new chapter as well. I hope you all liked the small read, and sorry for not updating for a long while.

I encourage all readers to review. :)

An Unbelievable Strength

A new spark of interest enlightened me to write a new chapter.

I encourage all readers to read on, enjoy, and review. :)

Chapter 6: An Unbelievable Strength

It was a brand new day as always. Yesterday, Chris and Lucario had been enjoying themselves more than they could think. Although Chris felt that there was hope to form a nice bond with Lucario, the Aura Pokémon still held the idea that Chris wasn't his trainer. He just saw him as a friend.

Waking up first, Lucario opened his eyes and looked outside for a brief moment. "(I wonder if he still wants to play video games with me,)" he said. "(… I hope I don't become an addict…)"

The Aura Pokémon heard the teen yawning behind his back. Looking over his shoulder, Lucario was greeted by a small smile from Chris. "Oh, good morning… You're such an early bird…"

"I am tempered in body and mind," Lucario said. "Therefore, I do my best to look strong."

Chris slowly sat up. He wondered how much of that was true. In fact, he wanted to ask an important question. Given his eyes, the teen was fully awake. "That reminds me. How did get to be so tall?"

Lucario stared blankly. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Am I very tall?"

It surprised Chris that the Lucario never thought he was very big. Chris barely even reached Lucario's neck, making it possible that the back of his head would have an accident should he ever decide to

stop with the towering Pokémon following him from behind. "Well, yes, you're… huge."

Lucario couldn't help but preen a little. "That goes to show I'm strong," he said

"Let me measure your size to give you an idea…"

A few minutes later, the teen had the Aura Pokémon stand upright while Chris used a measuring tape. Not counting the long ears, Chris had to climb up his bed to reach the top of Lucario's head. He then went all the way down to the floor, Lucario staring down at him. "According to this measurement, you're… 6'07"?!"

"Is that tall?" Lucario asked.

Chris stood up. "I-I'm just 5'3"! You're technically a giant the same size as a Mewtwo!" he pointed out. "Lucario are roughly just 4 feet that…"

Lucario got in deep thought. He was actually thinking about fighting Mewtwo someday, but his chances were pretty slim as they were. "Then perhaps I'm just a special kind of Lucario."

"N-no kidding…" Chris trailed off, kind of shaking.

The Aura Pokémon noticed the shaking. "Why are you shaking?" he asked.

"I-it's… uh… just that it's kind of a scary thought," Chris said. "I fear that one day you might try to hurt me if I accidentally offend you in some way…"

The Aura Pokémon stared flatly at the teen. "… You're my only hope to survive in this world," he said. "I'm very grateful that you're taking care of me." He placed a hand on Chris's shoulder. "Instead of hurting you, I would most likely… no, I would protect you from harm if somebody else were to do it."

Chris stared up at Lucario for a long while, blushing slightly at the statement. "Uh… That's… really kind of you, really…" Chris trailed off. "… It kind of feels like I have a super guardian watching my back."

Lucario chuckled. "I don't mind you calling me that," he said.

Chris chuckled next. "N-no, just saying your name is enough to me," he said. "Besides, what am I thinking? You're just tall. Last time I checked, your level was around 40…"

The Aura Pokémon felt a bit peeved, but he restrained a glare. "I told you that I'm strong," he said, facing the bed and lifting it up with a single hand. He then looked back at Chris. "Not just tall but very strong."

The teen could hardly believe what he saw. There he was, staring at a tall Lucario lifting a pretty heavy bed with one bare hand that just barely budged if it was pulled by one normal person. "… Holy… crap!" Chris exclaimed in disbelief. "You're…"

"Very strong," Lucario finished, still holding the bed with one hand. It didn't really look like his hand was even struggling with the sheer weight of the bed.

"I-I see and don't believe it…" He got closer to him. "That status screen was lying to me all this time or what? This bed is just too heavy to lift this easily!"

Lucario seemed to raise a hairless eyebrow. "Really now?"

"I can't believe you don't know your own strength," Chris said. "You're like… like some kind of Pokémon version of Hercules, except without the muscles!"

"Who's Hercules?"

"Uh, the strongest Greek God with incredible strength…"

Lucario looked back at the bed on top of his hand and smiled slightly, placing it back to its spot. "I feel so special today for some reason," he said, clearly joking.

Chris couldn't help but grab one of Lucario's hands. The Aura Pokémon saw how the teen pressed his own hand. "Your hand feels kind of soft, but then there's some kind of very thick layer underneath…"

"I'm a Steel-type," Lucario pointed out. "I have normal skin on the outside, but a thick body of steel underneath."

"And very fluffy whenever taking a bath," Chris's mouth blabbed quickly. "I-I mean, you're just… amazing…" The Aura Pokémon started to suspect that the teen was trying so hard to make Lucario like him. He quietly read the teen's mind without raising suspicion. " (First a Lucario stumbles upon my room, then I start to surprisingly open up to him, and now I find out that he's apparently Hercules' own Pokémon! Oh goodness, how much more incredible can this get?)"

It was clearly Lucario Appreciation Day.

Chris shook his head, not even feeling that his privacy got violated a bit. "Y-you know, this made me think that you probably want to do some sort of exercise… A Pokémon like you surely wants to keep getting stronger," he said.

Somehow, Lucario liked where the conversation was going. He had food and commodities, and the only part that was missing was working out. "Yes, definitely," he said. "I feel like there is a lot more room for improvement."

"Oh, in that case, I want to have you do something for me after we have breakfast," Chris said. "We'll be going outside to the yard. I just hope that I don't make you feel undermined for what I have in mind…"

Not wanting to mind-read again, Lucario asked, "What?"

"It's just so that I have wood to burn for the chimney outside," Chris said. "Problem is, the logs are pretty long and they can't fit into the chimney as they are. It's not even cold yet, but so I thought that you'll like to… uh… use your strength to snap the wood in half just so that you get to train for a bit."

Lucario kept staring at him till he said, "Let's eat so you can show me those logs."

After experiencing the wonders of bacon, the teen brought the towering Pokémon outside to the yard. They went behind the house till reaching a spot full of long logs. The logs themselves were very wide, and Lucario saw the chimney before: they weren't going to fit they way they were.

"Unless you want to use the axe inside the small storehouse behind," Chris said, "you're all free to go."

Lucario looked at the pile of wide logs. There were a lot of them. "Good, this shall prove to be a worthwhile job," he said, snapping his neck a bit. He then cracked his large hands.

"(Oh god, he's starting to feel narcissistic. I shouldn't have said so many remarks… Wait… is he trying to impress me?)" Chris realized, feeling a bit touched by the thought. "(I-in that case, I need to keep this going…) It's okay if you don't want to do everything."

"Are you kidding me?" Lucario asked, looking sideways at Chris. "I can do this in one sitting. Watch me." He lifted a wide log, possibly the widest one of the whole bunch, and placed it down. Moving to the tip, Lucario brought a heavy fist down, snapping the thick log apart into two pieces.

Chris was amazed. The log was so thick that it would've taken three axe strikes to cut through, but Lucario only needed one hit. "T-that

was… very good," Chris remarked. "(Oh no, I'm remarking him again… Who am I kidding, this is awesome!)"

Lucario moved back and cut another section off with one fist. Having moved to the last section, Lucario stood up and crushed the middle portion with his foot.

"(Even his feet are crazy-strong!)" Chris thought. "You're… downright super powerful in any way…"

"Thank you," Lucario said, almost as if he was acting cool. He looked over to the pile of wide logs. "There is still some job to do…"

Ten minutes it was all it took for the Herculean Lucario to finish with the logs. Chris had been staring, watching the dutiful Aura Pokémon display his unbelievable strength. The logs were giving away to his sheer strength. There were instances that pointed wood would leave a nasty mark on anybody's fist, but Lucario's fists completely reduced them all into pieces. Once he had cut down all the logs, Lucario picked them up and stacked them on one arm, carrying a pyramid of ten logs to place back on the spot he took them from.

Chris was still impressed, as the towering Lucario approached him, dusting off his knuckles. "There you go," he said. "You're ready for the winter."

"Y-yes, thank you," Chris said smiling. "I have to give it to you. You're surely the strongest being in this world."

"Why, thank you," Lucario said nodding, pulling Chris under his arm. The teen's face was practically brushing against the Pokémon's furred chest. "I feel stronger just knowing that."

The teen leaned in and wrapped one arm behind Lucario, not even budging him one bit despite the small force. "If my Lucario is happy, then I'm happy," Chris said.

The two chuckled for a bit until they realized they were sharing a hug of sorts. Staring shocked at each other, Chris and Lucario separated and looked away, feeling very embarrassed.

On Chris's side, it felt like he truly owned a Lucario. The feeling was really nice, to say the least, but then embarrassment took in. "(Oh god, I just… I just hugged him… and he did it first to me!)" Chris thought alarmed. "(Is… is he perhaps figuring out that…)"

On Lucario's side, it felt to him that Chris was his trainer. The feeling was so natural that he was grateful he even did such a move, but then realization hit him hard. "(W-what did I just… I pulled him into a hug without objecting?)" Lucario thought alarmed. "(But I have another trainer! How could I do this?)"

Not wanting to feel embarrassed anymore, the two turned to face each other with small smiles. "I think we got carried away there…" Chris trailed off.

"Agreed," Lucario said. "… It was… nice, though."

"U-uh… yes, it was," Chris said. "For a second there, I thought you were making sure I was okay, but I'm obviously dreaming too much…"

Lucario looked sideways. "… You can… think of it that way…" He blushed slightly. "You're not really bad at all. It almost feels to me that my trainer was right next to me."

Chris looked sad. "(I hope one day you realize that I've been using that trainer you speak of to raise you, so… technically speaking… I am your trainer…)"

Lucario felt that his ears drooped sideways a little. "(How can this even happen to me?)" he asked himself. "(I barely have any memories of my original trainer and yet I don't feel a thing for her. Yet when I'm with Chris… his attitude… his hospitality… his aura, all make me feel right at home… Ugh, I can't let him make me change

my mind. I must be loyal! But still, part of me doesn't want to leave him behind!)"

The teen cleared his throat. "W-well, since we're done here, why don't we go back outside?" Chris suggested. Lucario snapped out from his thoughts and nodded.

As the day passed, Lucario and Chris felt conflicted of what was going to happen tomorrow. The luxuries at home would eventually make Lucario feel more grateful towards Chris, who would forget any troubles clouding his mind.

Future would only tell them both how the events would play out with time…

After night settled in, Chris then recalled something. "Hey, Lucario," he said.

Lucario, sitting on the floor to the side, looked at him over his right shoulder. "Yes?"

"I forgot yesterday, but… Do you want to play… video games tomorrow… with me?"

The Aura Pokémon seemed to grin. "Oh, sure. I'm looking forward to it."

Lucario would eventually warm up even more all the same.

I completely forgot about Chris's plan till I looked back, but still, now everyone here can tell how special this Lucario is.

And in case you want to imagine clear depictions of them both, I have released art in DeviantArt and the Colors site. My username in both places is the same as here. Take in mind that I'm fresh to this, so my drawings will possibly get better with time.

I encourage all readers to review. :)

A Very Odd Team

And thus, the plan begins. Nobody said anything about the plan working flawlessly, though…

I encourage all you aura fanatics to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 7: A Very Odd Team

Gone were the days Chris would think Lucario were the fiercest of Pokémon who did anything but mundane activities. His… or rather, the Lucario in his home has showed him that curiosity was perhaps the most lethal weapon that would rope unlucky individuals into dangerous traps that would forever change their life.

This was the case today. It all involved a Wiimote and a Nunchuk.

After having directed Lucario to do the usual morning routine that was eating breakfast and having a refreshing shower followed by dental hygiene, it was time for Chris to put his plan in action: get Lucario to play video games with him. The plan was very thrilling. Lucario proved that he saw more into what made video games very exciting. He was put in a good course.

Awkwardly holding a Wiimote and a Nunchuk in his rather large paws - which were even larger on him due to his tremendous size - Lucario had no trouble pressing the comparably smaller buttons. Chris was impressed that this Lucario could manage to achieve such a feat. "I can easily use any region of my fingers as a solid point to touch anything smaller without overlapping… but I need a little more practice, still," he had told Chris. The articulation of his three large "fingers" on each hand was impressive as well. A finger in charge of the upper buttons, another in charge of any side buttons.

Chris fought back the thought involving taking a picture of a large Lucario holding the controllers. "I'll never stop saying this. You're amazing in so many ways beyond your incredible strength." Lucario preened a little, feeling touched at the remarks. "Are you… really sure you want to play video games with me?"

"They seemed like a good way to pass the time as I saw you play them," Lucario said. "But… why start with these, uh, controllers? I saw you playing with another one…"

"I just thought that you needed to have a fresh start before you move on to more complicated games," Chris said. "It's… also a test of patience to see how long you can stay calm."

"I see no reason why I should throw a tantrum over this," Lucario said with a deadpan look.

Chris shrugged. "Every person is different in a single topic… You'll never know till you try." They both stared at the TV in front of them. Amusing as it was, Chris was making Lucario play Wii Sports. The plan was to have him play every single sport event. Seeing that Lucario was a Fighting-type, the most obvious first choice was to have him play boxing. "Have you ever heard about boxing?"

"Oh, yes," Lucario said, smiling a bit. "Us Fighting-types are into that sort of sport… but I can't remember why I like it even if I never got to participate in a boxing match."

"(Probably because Pokémon games never have a boxing mini-game in them,)" Chris thought. He refrained from voicing out his thoughts. "Incidentally, do you know how to read, Lucario?"

Lucario grimaced and shook his head. "I can only talk…" he admitted.

A very happy thought crossed Chris's mind. "Oh, do you mind if I teach you how to read soon?"

The Aura Pokémon's lips formed a small smile. "Please do," he said. "I want to learn many more things… They all are very enlightening."

There were more things to show Lucario. There were so many days, all of them being special. He could hardly wait what else to do after this plan was over with, but he needed to focus on the current situation. "I'll gladly teach you," Chris said smiling. "For now, though, let's start your first boxing match."

"Am I going to punch you?" Lucario asked, and Chris saw his anguished look. He was afraid of the concept of punching somebody far more defenseless. "I… I don't want to…"

Chris shivered at the thought. "N-no, you don't punch a living person in this game," he said, and Lucario sighed in relief. "What you're going to do is this… The controllers, they respond to the motion of your hands."

The Aura Pokémon raised an eyebrow. "Huh, that's weird," he admitted.

"We're in a new generation where games are starting to become far more interactive than before," Chris explained. "Technology is advancing rather fast in this world. We'll eventually have flying cars in a few years… but I really don't think that'll happen." He shook his head. "In any case, the left controller you're holding has the function to move a pointer at the screen. Try it."

Confused, Lucario moved the Wiimote in his hand to the screen. He got startled a bit when a small hand appeared, hovering over the screen's area. Tilting his head, he wobbled the controller, watching the pointer following his control's aiming direction. "That's really curious…" he said. "Uh, how am I playing boxing again?"

Chris forgot Lucario couldn't read. "Move that pointer over that rectangle over there… No, the other one."

A few minutes passed and Lucario had been taught everything he needed to know about playing boxing. He just had to make sure that he didn't throw wide punches since the two controllers were attached by a short cable that could easily snap if Lucario wasn't careful.

Chris saw that Lucario looked like a pro. Fists clenched tightly on the controllers brought in front of his chest, the Lucario was even hopping slightly to the sides. Something told Chris that Lucario was getting a little too much into the experience. The Aura Pokémon grunted and growled occasionally whenever throwing slow, but clean punches forward. "And these opponents are supposed to stand a chance against me? Don't make me laugh," Lucario said deadpan.

The teenager chuckled and thought Lucario was cool saying such a thing. "You're kind of a natural for this game. There are going to be harder opponents as you progress, though," Chris said.

"Huh, I would like to have a go with them," Lucario said. "These people are dropping like flies against me…"

The Lucario had a burning fighting spirit, Chris thought. Even though Lucario was playing a simulation, he thought he was doing valuable exercise. He completely enjoyed boxing, feeling proud of every single Mii opponent that doubled over and lost the heated matches against him. "They're lucky I'm not there inside the TV," Lucario commented. "Otherwise, they would have died at the first attack."

"My goodness, you're really into this," Chris said flatly.

"And they're making a grave mistake. I'll let them keep fighting me…"

Chris didn't like how Lucario was showing some heavy examples of pure cockyness, but he let the Aura Pokémon go on. As long as Lucario was thrilled to play, it would help Chris to open up more to him. Yesterday just proved that Lucario, deep down, didn't mind the prospect of protecting the teen even if it meant enjoying his company. Chris had to bring that thought out from Lucario's depths.

There was no way Chris could get Lucario back to his world…

From the start, Lucario had been enjoying beating so many opponents. Thinking that Lucario needed to rest between matches, Chris took it upon himself to become some sort of coach and hand Lucario a bottle of cold water, but he knew the Aura Pokémon's stamina was very inhuman. Even then, Lucario sat down on the bed and took the bottle, almost entirely drinking more than half the water. "This is so good," he said, flashing a small smile. "It does feel like I'm doing real-life boxing."

"I'm so but so glad that you're enjoying yourself," Chris said, returning the smile.

Lucario nodded almost too quickly. "I can't wait to continue my long winning streak. These opponents are getting harder, yet they're not that difficult."

"I'll be sitting here watching you. If you feel tired, I'll give you more water."

"Thank you."

The thankful message made Chris feel at home as he saw Lucario stand his full height, raising his eager fists to do battle.

That feeling of being on top of the world was soon coming to an end.

Lucario started to lose, much to his chagrin. His long winning streak had been forever shattered. That meant he needed to start from the ground and create another one to break his record. Unfortunately, he was playing to raise his rank. The opponents were outsmarting his moves. Chris's fears then surfaced when he heard Lucario say, "How is it possible that I'm starting to lose against these people?"

"I-it's just the game trying to make things more challenging," Chris said. "I-I believe you can eventually defeat them."

Lucario barely managed to defeat the next set of opponents. Soon enough, he fell into a rather long losing streak that was making his blood boil. Chris noticed the scary serious look on the Aura Pokémon's red eyes. His eyelids were inclining down on his muzzle's direction while the back portions held their ground. He was glaring fiercely at the screen.

Just as Lucario was losing his remaining health in the game, Chris said, "Y-you know, you probably need to pause the game for a bit an-
"

"AAH!" Lucario let out a small yet loud shout as his character doubled over, losing to his opponent. The Aura Pokémon bared his fangs and tightened his fists in pure frustration.

Then a very startling sound came from his hands.

Lucario briefly snapped out from his rage, dropping the fierce glare. Chris covered his mouth as Lucario stared down at the controllers. Somewhere along his frustration, his almighty hands had put up an unnecessarily tight grip on the controllers that they had been reduced to crumpled plastic and broken chips. The broken batteries had let out a few sparks, but Lucario's tough body didn't feel a tingle.

"… My… my controllers…" Chris muttered.

"…" Lucario averted his eyes from looking at Chris. He was now blushing in embarrassment. "… I… I'm sorry for… for this…" Lucario closed his eyes, angered that he couldn't come up with a better apology.

Chris couldn't shake the fact that this was going to happen eventually. After watching Lucario so thrilled to punch virtual people silly, it all had to end badly soon enough. Chris was not as competitive as Lucario, but the first thought the latter needed a small break. It was Lucario's first time, after all. "… It's… not that bad, really," Chris said. "I still have reserves… and money is not hard to come by."

"Still…" Lucario muttered, sitting down. The teen sighed and grabbed the remains of the unlucky controllers, dropping them in a nearby trash can. Lucario put his chin on his hands. "This is so embarrassing…"

"I hope you're not referring to your… losing streak," Chris struggled to say the last words.

"… I don't know if I should continue," Lucario muttered depressed.

Chris felt stuck in his plan. It had turned out for the worse. "(I just don't like seeing him like that. It's going to make him feel so down! I need to change this…) Listen…" Lucario turned to him, although he did it very slow, "… there are far better games in this one that won't make you feel like this… If you give me a chance, I'll assure you that you won't regret it."

Lucario moved his eyes away, his face facing the teen. "…"

"You were having so much fun," Chris pointed out. "I… I want to see you so lively like that."

Lucario then looked up to Chris. As he did so, he stood fully back up, now staring down at him. He seemed to be thinking when he fell silent. "… If you say so," he said, forcing a small smile.

"(Alright, there might be still a chance…)" Chris nodded and smiled, taking another controller. "For the next set of games, though, we're going to be using just one controller. The Nunchuk isn't necessary."

Lucario looked ashamed. "You're not thinking that I might break two, right?" he asked.

"N-no, no," Chris said, looking a bit shaken. "The other games really don't need the Nunchuk."

"Okay…"

The teen felt really sorry for the Aura Pokémon. It was like a giant was tearing things apart by accident, having no control of himself. Perhaps Chris needed to change Lucario for the better. The next lessons of life he wanted to impart to Lucario would have different results, as long as nothing disastrous would drive the Aura Pokémon to anger or shame… or a combination of both.

A tennis match would probably help to cheer his spirits.

After a while of having explained the control for the game, Lucario had no trouble playing it. It was far less stressful than the boxing matches. "This is… kind of dull," Lucario finally admitted.

"(I feared he'd say that,)" Chris thought. "Well… let's play together as a team."

Lucario looked surprised at the idea. "More than one player can play this?"

"Of course. You saw the options before getting here, right? It's not always fun to play by yourself. For that, many games have the option for multiple people to play together or against each other…" Chris grimaced. "Since I don't want to repeat your first competitive issues, we're going to play together as a team against the computer characters."

Lucario briefly recalled the thrill of a trainer and Pokémon working together in a battle. This was vastly different, yet he couldn't help but think it was sort of the same… Something was odd, though…

How much longer would he try to remember the vague memories he had of the past? It was something he hadn't told Chris yet. Lucario was under the illusion that he shared many fond memories with his trainer; memories he was trying hard to uncover… yet felt like there was nothing. The psychological trauma in his mind was haunting him. The new memories he was making now were completely overshadowing the past he tried to remember.

Feeling sidetracked, Lucario snapped out from his thoughts and focused on the present. There was no use lingering on the past…

The time passed, and the two eventually reached a new friendly stage. Playing together, Lucario deemed Chris a fun person, and Chris deemed Lucario a very capable player. Chris then just heard Lucario chuckle. "I can't believe this, but… I'm better than you at hitting the ball."

"T-that's just because I'm rusty!" Chris said embarrassed. "I never put too much attention to this game because I had better games to play!"

"Really now…"

"I hope for the life of you that you're not playfully mocking me!"

"You just missed the ball."

"S-stop distracting me!"

"But I'm just telling you to focus."

"O-okay, I'll focus! (He's having his day now, but I need to stop getting flustered!)"

The teen never found out the Aura Pokémon had read his mind, pleased to hear he was briefly outsmarting his human teacher.

Eventually, the two managed to play with more sync, and the playful teasing died down as the game matches went on. Unfortunately, they reached the same point where the computer characters were giving them a run for their money. However, since Chris was roped into the game this time, there was a positive outcome.

Lucario grunted in frustration. "They're getting better than us," he said.

"It's okay," Chris said. "We can still pull through. If we can't, we'll train harder in exhibition matches."

The Aura Pokémon smiled. "That's just an indication that there's more room for improvement. I like to think I can become better."

"Yes, exactly! It'd be boring winning all the time otherwise."

"Yes… yes, it would… (That's funny… I never thought I'd say that. Here I was, thinking losing was a very bad thing… He really is a good teacher…)" Lucario looked sideways at Chris. "(… I… I can't let him make me think that he's better than my trainer… It's just….it's just… !)"

The game paused, snapping Lucario out of his thoughts. "I'm getting bored of playing tennis already," Chris said. "Are you?"

"What? Uh… I guess so," Lucario replied.

"You look odd… Did something happen?" Chris asked.

"N-no, nothing happened," the Aura Pokémon said. "Can we please continue? I'm eager to see what else is in store for us."

"…" Chris forced a smile and nodded. "Have you ever heard about golf?"

The next phase of the plan was making Lucario into a golfer. It took half a smooth swing of his arms and hands to break a second Wiimote over his head, the pieces lifelessly bumping down his body. His jaw fell in shock. "I-I'm sorry!" Lucario uttered a fast apology. "I did it without even thinking!"

"I-I still have two more to spare," Chris said, hesitant to say the fact. He took the broken pieces and tossed them in the trash can, joining the unlucky victims inside. He handed over another controller to Lucario. "Please, be careful. They're dropping even faster than I thought they would for my tastes…"

"Y-yes… I-I'll be more careful, I promise…" Lucario shyly took the third controller.

Lucario had a hard time trying to get the controls right. He would swing too fast, as if he wanted to send the golf ball across the sky instead of the hole. Chris had made it a rule not to get too close to Lucario while he used the controller, or else the possibility of dying was high. Knowing the almighty Aura Pokémon, he would really come to a halt. He was a master at anticipating blows.

The topic about controlling his strength was a different matter, but that was for another day.

The Aura Pokémon eventually caught the ball of the control, and he was now swinging clean shots at the highest level without overlapping. "Who thought it was a good idea to put this limit in my swings?" Lucario questioned, clearly a bit peeved about not showcasing his full potential.

"Well, you got to remember this is a family game… There needs to be a chance for anybody to be able to win," Chris explained.

There came another issue that didn't involve breaking a third controller. Due to the game's nature to add a wind hazard, Lucario couldn't tell exactly what it meant. He just knew it played a part in the game. He did notice that his ball would smoothly turn to the direction the arrow on the screen pointed at. "I assume that arrow has some effect on my swings?" Lucario theorized.

"O-oh! Yes," Chris said. "That arrow tells you the direction where the wind is going. Depending on how fast it is, your shots will be affected."

"The number changes between holes every once in a while."

"It's completely at random, so you need to adjust your direction a bit… It won't always be perfect, but you can get very close to avoiding a fatal mistake."

"I… I just don't know how to tell," Lucario said. "Do I need to… read?"

It became apparent that Lucario was annoyed that he couldn't read properly. There was something odd to that once Chris had recalled that Lucario had read the cover of the game he was playing two days ago. "Wait a minute. You don't know how to read, yet you read the cover you picked two days ago?"

Lucario paused the game and looked away from Chris. "… I read… except not through the common method," he said, turning to look at Chris. "I read your mind while you were playing. You just happened to think what I saw on the cover. I think you saw me, and you immediately assumed I was going to read the words… In fact, I've been using you as my method for reading all this time…" His ears, very slightly, drooped. "… This is very embarrassing for me to admit…"

"(He… seriously needs guidance,)" Chris said. "(Without guidance, he'll be intruding a little too much into my own thoughts…)" The teen patted the Aura Pokémon's back. "Please, don't be so embarrassed. You're doing an amazing progress."

"Am I?" Lucario asked, worried that it wasn't true.

"Yes, you do," Chris said. "You're still shaken by the fact you're here all alone in the world… but you have me for support, and I'll do the best of my ability to teach you what you want…" He forced a smile. "You're paying me with your company… and… that's really all I could ask for…"

"… Chris…" Lucario muttered. "… Thank you for telling me that."

"We're supporting each other like Pokémon and trainer," Chris said. He gasped under his breath and shook his head. "I-I mean, we're like Pokémon and trainer, but that doesn't mean we're officially like that! You still have your trainer…"

Lucario smiled a bit. "I don't mind you being a replacement for my trainer… i-in that you teach me all this, that is. (I need to stop thinking this soon. I need to stop thinking this soon. I need to stop thinking this soon. I need to stop thinking this soon. I need to stop thinking this soon. I need to stop thinking this soon. I need to stop thinking this soon…)"

Chris decided that it was a nice gesture to give Lucario a hug. The Aura Pokémon got startled by the action. "Let's keep enjoying our time together, shall we?" Chris asked.

"(On the other hand… I like where this is going,)" Lucario thought pleased. "All right, let us continue… but I don't like golf much."

"Let's try baseball next!" Chris piped up.

He was the star of the stadium: The Aura Pokémon Baseball Player Extraordinaire. Together with his (replacement) human partner Chris, the computer characters stood no chance to their combined might. Sure, the virtual ball should have sent straight into space with his strength, but the limitations of the game did not stop him to pave his way to stardom.

"Aren't any of these sports in real life, too?" Lucario asked while swinging a clean hit to the ball, scoring a Home Run. "Instead of trying them out in the house, why don't we go out? Oh, wait, I remember…"

Chris rubbed his chin. "I could try to sneak you out with your Poké Ball to somewhere alone… But I fear you'd get spotted."

"It's very easy for me to detect over ten-thousand auras in a hundred miles, though."

"Yes, but we still need to…" Chris did a double-take after registering the statement better. "Say how many what when?"

Lucario looked down at him. "From where I am standing right now, I can detect thousands of people within a hundred miles going in their everyday life. For example, there are three people living right next door… They seem to be having their meal."

The teen blinked in surprise. Chris knew there were three people next door. He had never told Lucario about any neighbors. "R-really now?" he asked. "If I remember, well-trained Lucario can detect auras within a mile or so… but you can really go beyond that limit?"

Lucario was just about to swing. "It's very easy to me…" He swung his bat. "Do other Lucario have that… limit? It looks pretty underdeveloped compared to what I can do."

"That's because you're some kind of top percentage Lucario!" Chris said. "All the Lucario I have seen… uh… from the TV and the games I've played don't really look like you… Seriously, you never met another Lucario?"

"Sadly, no," Lucario said. "The opponents I've faced never had a single Riolu for that matter… What was that about? It's like no trainers wanted to have a shot at owning my line."

"Your species are really that rare in-game," Chris pointed out. "Only the most important people do own one, though…"

"I see. It's a shame I can't accurately compare myself with another Lucario."

There was no way to confirm that all Lucario were nukers bent of dominating the Pokémon World, so Chris came up with a better response. "I truly believe you're the best Lucario out there."

Lucario blinked, blushing a bit at the remark. "… Thanks…" He smiled to himself, scoring another Home Run.

"You're such a natural for baseball."

"I know."

"You've gotten awfully cocky, too…"

"I know… I mean…"

"It kind of suits you, though. You really look cool."

"T-thanks again…"

Lucario had a magnificent run in his first baseball session. However, winning a lot led him to get bored quickly of the sport. "There's one last sport for you to try out: bowling," Chris said. "You want to go ahead with it? Maybe we can play against each other for real…"

The Aura Pokémon looked concerned. "I'll try not to let my competitive spirit get the better of me," he said. "Things are at stake now that you want to play against me…"

"You really don't know how frightened I am after hearing you say that…"

"Actually, your aura is emitting emotional waves of pure fright," Lucario pointed out until he gasped slightly. "W-what I'm trying to say is… I won't snap at you. I promise… Also, I won't crush another controller."

"I'll take your word for it…"

Time passed and Chris could hardly believe that this Lucario was wiping the floor with his sorry butt. Recalling that the swing of the arm in bowling was very crucial, Chris could only assume that Lucario had perfect hand movements despite the fact the Aura Pokémon's hands were huge. The score was a sight to behold. Chris was nearly 40 points behind. "How can this be even happening?" Chris questioned. "R-right, I'm just into other games. T-this is just a different genre I'm really not very into…"

"Maybe I was born for this."

"Q-quiet, you big cocky blue dog…"

"Do you want to destroy your controller? I found it a very good stress reliever." Chris stared at him with a very deadpan look. "S-sorry…"

"I have no hope winning against you… and I'm not even letting you win!"

There was so much good chemistry going on between the human and the Pokémon. The whole day went by as they recalled all the moments Lucario enjoyed so much. As night finally came around, Chris was lying on his bed with Lucario sitting down next to it. A big change, however, was that the Aura Pokémon was not facing away from the teen. Lucario was now sitting sideways, his back leaning against the drawer. He looked down at Chris. "Thank you so much for everything today," Lucario thanked Chris.

Chris put his arms on top of his body. "We really had so much fun today… if you don't count the controllers you…" When he saw Lucario looking down in shame, Chris decided to drop the way he was going. "… I-it's no big deal! I have a lot of spare money to buy replacements! Please, don't get so down…"

"I won't…" Lucario said, smiling truthfully at Chris. "Today made me realize that I need to learn how to read. It's very embarrassing… Has any other Pokémon done this before?"

The teen looked up at the ceiling. "Lucario, that's something I really don't know myself," he said. "But… you have showed me that Pokémon like you are capable of so much more if they put their minds into it… Honestly, I'd never thought I'd get the chance to see it firsthand, but here you are, adapting so well to what a normal human like me gets to do…"

The Aura Pokémon blushed a bit. "Is it that weird?"

"Absolutely not!" Chris said. "You are a Lucario with limitless potential… You have unbelievable strength… you can eat and hold a

fork properly despite your size… you can play video games… your aura abilities look flawless… Just think about what else you can do after I teach you everything I know!"

Lucario made a happy expression. "You think I can do it?"

"Yes, you can!" the teen said. "Tomorrow, I'm going to start teaching you how to read. From there, we'll branch out to other things… Once you master all that, you'll become an example of a Renaissance Pokémon."

"A Renaissance Pokémon?" Lucario wondered.

"Oh… I learned this from school last semester. Hundreds of years ago, the term Renaissance Man referred to a person who was the jack of all trades…"

"And master of none, I believe," Lucario said. "That sounds depressing…"

"Oh no, that's not how it is," Chris said. "The Renaissance Man was the jack of all trades AND master of all that he learned… Nowadays, though, there hasn't been another Renaissance Man in this day and age, but I do believe many people try to be one…" He looked worried. "The only level we can achieve is being the jack of all trades, though… which is why I want you to reach that point… and maybe, just maybe be a master."

Lucario blinked, liking the idea of being a Renaissance Pokémon. "… Please, let us work together to become just like that," he said, his eyes heavily implying excitement.

"I don't know if I can do it, but since you're so pumped up…" Chris smiled, "I wish to see how far you can progress."

The teen was taken aback once Lucario placed a hand on top of his hands. "Let's do this tomorrow."

Chris stared at Lucario's hand for a long while till he shyly cupped his own hands. The human's hands could barely cover the Pokémon's hand. The two felt a warm feeling coursing through them, and they did not want to break up from their action. "… Yes, let's do this tomorrow."

The two chuckled together before going to sleep.

The Aura Pokémon would rarely have his back facing the teen from that moment and onwards. Deep in his subconscious, Lucario was accepting Chris as a true friend to support himself… and maybe even more…

The light of the moon outside would distract his train of thoughts. Lucario, though, could hardly wait what else he could learn from his smart instructor. A trainer and Pokémon bond was starting to grow in place of a vague one…

Next chapter, Lucario is going to be taught how to read. We'll see how that goes for him.

I encourage everyone to review.

A Reading Experience

It's time for this Herculean Lucario to learn how to read properly.

I encourage all true Lucario fans to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 8: A Reading Experience

A green book of history sat on the towering Lucario's lap, while he himself was sitting down on the living room's couch, with Chris sitting right next to him. The book itself felt a bit heavy, but for the Herculean Lucario, he didn't feel any weight bringing him down. If anything, his body was sinking down the couch deeper than the lighter person who wanted him to learn how to read properly.

The book, now, looked rather intimidating to Lucario. It had two-hundred pages. Each page had dozens of sentences. Lucario thought this was punishment for breaking two controllers through a very thrilling round of virtual boxing, but it wasn't. His eyes lessened the glare he always had with him, and Chris quickly picked the facial expression as a worried one. "I don't really know if I can do this," Lucario told Chris.

"I'm not making you read the entire book," Chris pointed out. "The important thing is that you learn how to read."

That took a huge imaginary weight off from Lucario's shoulders once he sighed loudly.

"But if you're struggling a lot, then that means you're reading a lot."

While the heavy weight returned with half of its girth, Lucario went back to look worried.

Chris shook his head. "You can do this," he encouraged. "You're a very smart Pokémon with the strength to destroy Mt. Everest in less

than ten punches… If you're wondering, Mt. Everest is a huge mountain chain."

The encouragement made Lucario feel better. He smiled a bit to the teen. "All this is for me to become a Renaissance Pokémon, right?" Lucario asked.

"Exactly!" Chris piped up. "Your body is a weapon of mass destruction, but it'd be really nice if your mind was just as tempered… Well, I'm not really sure if you're mass destruction material, but your strength is incredible."

The Aura Pokémon chuckled with pride. He wanted to hear more compliments from Chris…

Wait, this felt wrong, Lucario thought. The compliments were nice, but he needed to stay focused and avoid the horrendous thought of subconsciously replacing his vague trainer for the teen. Hopefully, Chris wasn't going to catch on and figure out that Lucario was deliberately trying to shut him off.

Lucario got startled when Chris intruded his train of thoughts by grabbing his right hand with both hands. The Lucario was huge, and thus his body parts were equally big. Chris could barely make a ring out of his fingers around Lucario's big black paw. There were no dirty thoughts in the teen, Lucario could tell that much, so he waited for him to say something before jumping to hasty conclusions. "Flipping pages is going to be a lot of work for you," Chris said. "Your… three fingers are large. It takes five fingers of mine put together to cover one of yours…"

Lucario blinked. "Is this going to affect my reading lessons?" he asked.

"Not by much," Chris replied. "It's flipping pages that will make things hard for you… I guess you'll be flipping them one by one in case you become interested in reading something in particular."

"What could I get interested into?" Lucario wondered. He had seen many books around the house before, yet none of them caught his attention. Though he remembered Chris had quite a collection of gaming magazines that begged him to see what other video games there were out there…

"Once you learn how to read by yourself, you'll find something good," Chris said. "Okay, the lesson has started. Try opening the book."

Lucario had no trouble opening the book. The cover's edge was longer than the pages, therefore, an easy spot for his big hands to work. His fingers, though, took him twenty pages ahead. He looked down and narrowed his eyes…

Dear goodness, those were a *lot* of words. They were small and black, yet when grouped together, they looked like a foe Lucario would never dare challenge without prior knowledge. He was big, powerful, and extremely intimidating, and there he was cowering against something several millimeters big that laughed at how big he was. How that even made any sense, he thought.

"Uh, Lucario….are you sweating?"

Lucario gasped and quickly cleaned the small drops of sweat from his black outlines of his face.

"… Was opening the book really stressing?"

"N-no," Lucario muttered.

"… Alright…" Chris shrugged. "Hopefully, the amount of letters didn't scare you or anything, but that's kind of impossible to believe."

Lucario then realized, this teen did not need to have an ability to read minds or auras. He was a dangerous opponent. Lucario's face was his weapon. Irony was cruel today.

"Just to see if you can read a little, I want you to pick the beginning of this page right over here…" Chris pointed at the top of the page. "Here, start reading from this point. No matter what, read what you can pronounce."

"…"

Twenty seconds were enough to leave a big impression.

Lucario could read single letters just fine. He knew the alphabet, but he just didn't know the order of all the letters. Another fact was that Lucario didn't even know the ABC song for sure. Intently, Chris stared at Lucario's expression. He was struggling to say words that had more than one letter. Only "I"s and "A"s were read. The large text was largely ignored by his stressed eyes. It was a disaster, Lucario thought. He was greatly embarrassing himself.

It felt all the more embarrassing with a person who knew how to read looking at him.

"…" Chris was a bit speechless. "Uh, okay! There's no need to be embarrassed," he said. "You can at least spell single letters…"

Lucario hung down his head. "I'm a disaster…"

"N-no, you aren't," the teen said. "This is your first time. You will improve quickly… C'mon! Don't look so down…"

"… Fine," Lucario said. He put up a serious look. "Let us continue."

Chris smiled a bit. "I'm here to teach you how to read. Remember that," he said. "To make things go faster, I'm going to read the passage to you. What you're going to do is watch my finger hover each word as I say them," he explained. "Pay careful attention, though. Try to read in your mind as I pass over repeated words you heard me say before… you got all that?"

Lucario nodded. "I guess if you put it that way, it'll be easier for me," he commented.

The teen chuckled. "You'll see things aren't going to be as nasty as you think they are," he said, and then he put a finger on the start of the paragraph. "Ready? Here we go."

The Aura Pokémon found himself listening to the teen talking while the latter drew his finger over the syllables of the words he read aloud. Lucario's red eyes were narrowed, trying to find out what the pronunciation of the words. He sharpened his mind as much as he could.

Unfortunately, the many combinations of words confused him. When he remembered how to read "can", the word "couldn't" scrambled his thoughts and messed everything else he had recalled from muscle memory. The word "can" appeared many times over the text, but words that had the same starting letter were throwing him off.

Then Lucario let out a loud grunt.

Chris shuddered and looked up. "I-is something wrong?" he asked.

Snapping out from his intimidating noise, Lucario looked at Chris. "I… I'm okay," he said, calming down.

The teen looked concerned. "Look…" Lucario feared he was going to be lectured. "If there's something that's bothering you, you should speak up," Chris said. "You're very new to reading. It's understandable that you're getting very anxious… not to mention you're kind of quick to anger."

Lucario closed his eyes in shame. "It's the way I am… I'm so very sorry," he apologized.

Perhaps it was the ideal time to do it, Chris thought. After all, Lucario was a Pokémon.

Mustering up some courage, the teen stroke the Lucario's back. Startled, Lucario looked at the teen's arm moving up and down. The little massage on his furred back made Lucario feel awkward at first, but there was a soothing effect that made him forget about his stress. Smiling was very tempting, but he decided against it. He didn't want to give Chris the wrong, positive impression. "I know this is going to be the cheesiest thing I've ever said to you, but… I believe in you," Chris said, his hand still rubbing the towering Pokémon's back. "You can do this."

Inside Lucario's mind, there was a happy Riolu wagging his tail while sitting down. It was a representation of his subconscious submitting very easily to the massaging feeling on his back. The little Riolu raised his arms with glee, barking energetically. He wished to be groomed a little more. The Riolu had been there all this time. It was the enemy Lucario fought within his mind, even if the little Pokémon didn't mean any harm at all. That Riolu was oblivious to the severe implications that would be to accept Chris as something more than a friend, yet at the same time, the Riolu didn't have any memories of the past with another trainer. That alone was enough to make Lucario wary of him.

The only important thing was that the Riolu was getting a lot of attention. He enjoyed it very dearly. If only he could just jump at Chris and hu-

Feeling that it was enough, Chris pulled back his hand. Lucario didn't react angrily to it.

The Riolu trapped inside Lucario's mind looked sad as Lucario's conscience manifested as a tall Lucario looming over, looking down at the small Emanation Pokémon with a reprehensive look that hinted punishment. The Riolu felt guilty and cowered in fear.

"… I… I want to continue," Lucario said. His conscience was keeping his subconscious in check. He looked serious and nodded. "No matter how much you read, don't stop. I think I'm picking up a few words."

Chris forced a smile. "Okay, that's what I wanted to hear," he said before resuming reading.

Lucario didn't know that his conscience looked the other way from his subconscious. The Riolu leaned forward to look down in front of his legs, as if he had the green book of history. His tail wagged slowly, waiting for something exciting to happen.

Several minutes passed, and Lucario found himself not being able to keep his head at a fixed angle. He was getting bored. He wanted to sleep. Chris didn't stop talking. This was so boring, he thought. This was surely punishment for his reckless actions on Chris's controllers, he thought. He couldn't find out why it was so important to read if he couldn't manage to keep his eyes open.

Just a little shut eye… Lean your head forward and let your aura appendages rest against your back and shoulders…

"… And as ironic as it was, the Roman Empire…" Chris gazed up at Lucario. He fell asleep sometime during his lesson. He didn't want to wake Lucario up. "(Oh, he fell asleep…)"

There was a certain curious sight. Chris saw the Lucario was smiling. As his big chest puffed up with air, the Lucario was at peace. His eyes were softly shut. An air of tranquility was surrounding him.

"(… He kind of looks… cute,")" Chris thought, blinking and flashing a small smile. Carefully closing the book, the teen thought that Lucario deserved some rest… But then Chris committed a big mistake. His temptations won over, and now his hand was stroking Lucario's chin. The Aura Pokémon, however, did not react negatively. He growled within his mouth, but the sound sounded like he was pleasantly growling thankfully.

The Riolu inside his mind was at full throttle. Feeling very happy due to the stroking of the Lucario's chin, Riolu started running around, skipping happily over the cloudy mist. He rejoiced as he dove into a thick cloud of mist, falling on his body with a soft thud. Rolling around

the misty atmosphere, the Riolu laughed. "More, more!" the Riolu shouted. "Don't stop!" He lay down on his belly, his tail wagging quickly to the sides.

Lucario growled as Chris continued rubbing his chin. The teen never told Lucario this, but he had a soft spot for cute creatures that weren't the usual animals found in his world. Lucario was obviously far from looking adorable, but his presence and overall attitude made Chris see a big Riolu who yearned for attention. That Riolu wanted a friend who could look after him… or rather, that Riolu was looking for a caring trainer. In turn, that Riolu would protect the trainer with his dear life and never leave his side.

The happy moment was short-lived once the Riolu yelled in a very happy tone, "I want you to be my trainer!"

" ***GUARGH!*** "

Chris had no time to react. Lucario snapped his eyes wide open and pushed the teen away to the other side of the couch with a swift hand motion. Panting heavily, the Lucario stood up at his full height and looked ticked off beyond words. When Chris rubbed his head and regained his senses, he gasped and backed off. The Lucario was looking sideways at him with a red eye that screamed absolute murder.

It was a very similar scene inside the enraged Lucario's mind. The Riolu sat down and covered his face, looking up at the same Lucario who was slowly approaching him with flaring fists of aura. His steps made the very mind shake violently, tumbling the helpless Riolu to the sides. The Riolu cried loudly as he begged him not to hurt him. The wild Lucario was enveloped in intense aura meant to kill instead of protect.

The Lucario in his mind was not the only one approaching his prey. The Lucario in the real world did the same, flaring up with thick cloud of aura that reached out for the ceiling and most of the living room. A small stomp of one foot caused the nearby furniture to shake slightly,

even the heavy couch itself. Through cruel irony, the Riolu was Chris. The teen grabbed a nearby couch pillow and covered himself. Running away was not a wise idea. The Lucario could very possibly grab him before he could even scamper off. Chris's heart beat so fast that he swore he was going to get a heart attack. The heart attack would've been nicer to have instead of an extremely dangerous, super martial arts humanoid dog impaling one of his wrist spikes on his head.

Lucario stood next to Chris and hastily grabbed him by his shirt's neck, pulling him high above. The mighty Aura Pokémon pulled back a fist, and said fist looked like it was about to explode judging the aura surrounding it got awfully thick and big. Panting heavily, Lucario let out a terrifying growl.

His mind was clouded with rage. It told him to get rid of the human.

Crying was an option now.

"D-don't hurt me!" Chris cried.

The words resonated within Lucario, and the Aura Pokémon's intense aura dimmed down as he managed to get a hold of himself. As his shocked, wild eyes stared up at Chris, Lucario moved down his right fist as its aura disappeared in a flash. Horrified of who he was holding with the other hand, Lucario let go of Chris, and the teen fell back to the couch and grabbed his throat in pain.

The Riolu inside Lucario's mind went through the same. It was grabbing its neck, and it quickly ran away and hid within the mist, all the while exchanging nervous glances at the almighty Lucario staring his way.

Back on the real world, Lucario backed away in fear as Chris gazed at him with a nervous look. His aura emitted waves of fright and desperation. "W-what was that for?!" Chris cried. "I-i-is it prohibited territory to rub your chin a bit?!"

"I-I didn't want t-"

"SHUT UP!" Chris yelled, and he ran away to his room, slamming the door shut. As he did so, Lucario held out his hand, wanting to grab him in a less violent way. But Chris was gone, and an aura of sadness came out from the room behind its door almost immediately…

Lucario stared into empty space before he fell to his knees. He leaned down and supported himself with his hands, shaking his head with guilt weighting his back. When he looked to the left, he found the green book of history messily lying down on the floor. The pages didn't fall flat. A few had been folded over in a messy fashion. It fell down when he stood up for sure.

His ears could easily catch Chris's whimpers of fear. Lucario knew that it was his responsibility to patch things up, or else he was never going to feel fine. As he grunted to himself, he stood up and went after the teen's trail. When Lucario stood before the door, he tried to open it. It was closed on the other side. "What do you want?!" Chris cried.

Lucario held a grip on the doorknob. "I… I…"

"Say something!" the deranged teen cried.

"I-I want to apologize!" Lucario shouted. "I didn't want to hurt you!"

"H-how can I tell?!" Chris yelled. "You almost killed me over a very stupid thing! I just wanted you to enjoy your sleep, and this is how you repay me?!" He slammed his face into his pillow and muffled his cries. "You're insane!"

"I-I'm not, I swear!" Lucario yelled.

Somewhere along his fright, Lucario accidentally put too much pressure on the doorknob that he ended up pushing the locked door, completely tearing its nuts and bolts apart with his almighty strength.

Gasping, Lucario put the door aside and entered the room without thinking that he had scared the teen even more. The Aura Pokémon knelt down beside the bed and saw Chris looking away. "Please, listen!" Lucario begged as he placed a hand on Chris's back.

It prompted Chris to scream.

Lucario recoiled and pulled back his hand. The teen was not available for any physical actions. "S-sorry!" Lucario said. "I'm not trying to hurt you!"

"You ripped my door apart!"

Ashamed, Lucario stole a glance from the broken door and looked back to the crying human. "I-I'm very sorry for that, too!" he apologized. "Please, just… just listen to me…" He was lowering the volume of his voice. "I didn't want to hurt you…"

Chris continued sobbing, not wanting to see the Lucario face-to-face. Lucario wasn't going to leave. He needed forgiveness so badly.

Seconds turned into minutes, and then minutes turned into hours. Neither of them wanted to move away. One wanted the other to go away, and that other wanted the first to forgive him. As four hours passed, it was now mid-afternoon. The two had skipped their meal for very good reasons. There was a nagging silence that unsettled them both. Lucario could still feel Chris's aura emitting waves of fear. Sadness was also there, and he wanted to change them both so badly. He was determined to do things right.

"… Are you still here?" a mildly composed Chris asked, his voice sounding angry.

"Yes," Lucario muttered.

"Are you waiting for an appropriate moment to grab me again?"

"No…" Lucario said ashamed. "I just… I just want you to… forgive me…"

"That's going to be really hard," Chris said. "I don't want to teach you *anything* after you nearly snapped out and tried to blow my head off. You're on your own. Go out to the world and get yourself hunted down by the people… There's no need for you to stay here any longe-"

"No!" Lucario shouted. Chris shuddered. "A-again, I'm very sorry…"

The teen grunted and turned around, giving Lucario a simple glare. Although the glare was pretty simple, it stabbed Lucario with a sharp dagger. "Saying sorry isn't enough!" Chris cried. His eyes were shedding tears. "Just teaching has the bad result of hurting me! How do you think I'm going to feel? You know how I feel, but I don't know how *you* feel exactly! What's your stupid problem?!"

Lucario looked away, his eyes looking guilty with worry. He debated if he should tell Chris that he feared to replace his trainer for him. "… I… I want to feel right at home…" Lucario muttered. "It's… it's my behavior that I need to work on…"

Chris turned away. "Oh, no kidding!" he said. "That sickening, unnerving glare of yours says a lot more than you think!"

"I… I guess it does…" the Aura Pokémon muttered in shame. "If… if you want, you could teach me how to… how to keep my rage under control…"

"…" Chris sobbed a bit and cleared his tears. He looked at Lucario over his right shoulder. "I don't have much confidence," he said. "B-but… but I want to give you the benefit of the doubt."

Lucario was given a chance. He needed not to screw it up.

The teen looked away. "Tell me why it was so wrong to rub your chin!" he demanded.

Lucario, startled, gasped and stuttered a bit. "T-there… there wasn't anything wrong with it," he admitted.

"Then why even snap out like that?!" Chris demanded louder. "You were smiling while you were sleeping! It just doesn't make any sense for you to get so angry and shake my house with your steps!"

Lucario could argue back that Chris didn't have any business to do that, but it was greatly discouraged to use that against him. He didn't want Chris to shut himself off. Yet, the Riolu in his subconscious enjoyed the feeling so much. "I… I know," Lucario muttered weakly.

"… In that case…" Chris turned around, looking hesitant, "… are you sure you won't snap out if I do it again? Do I have your word for it?"

The Aura Pokémon gasped. He looked away from the glaring brown eyes. "… Go ahead…"

Chris's shaking left hand slowly reached out for Lucario's chin. The Aura Pokémon looked sideways, and the teen pulled it back a bit. Lucario's eyes were heavily implying a feeling of worry, but it looked safe to proceed. Closing his eyes, Chris's fingers reached Lucario's chin and stroke it carefully and softly. The Aura Pokémon was looking down. "… S-so?" Chris asked. "Is something inside of you wanting to snap my neck in half?"

"N-no," Lucario said.

"Then let me in!" Chris shouted. "Tell me how you *really* feel!"

The Riolu trapped in his subconscious raised his head from the thick mist, looking around in confusion. When it felt the wonderful feeling of being groomed, the Riolu stood up and smiled a bit. Skipping on its feet, the Riolu beamed with joy as a careful Lucario stood next to him, watching him raise his little arms to the air. Seeing the Riolu barking happily, the Lucario managed to smile a bit, and suddenly a happy expression took over. A peace of mind had been achieved.

There was rage building up, but somehow, the happiness was overshadowing it to the point the rage was almost nonexistent.

Outside his mind, Lucario's lips were a straight vertical line. The line then curved its two ends up, much to the surprise of the teen. Still feeling unsure, Chris asked, "S-so?"

"…" Lucario's eyes closed, but his eyelids hinted a warm welcome. "It… it feels good," Lucario muttered. He didn't care if his head was making sure that it got a suitable spot for Chris's fingers to rub with care. "It feels really good."

Completely dumbfounded that the Lucario had become submissive, Chris continued stroking Lucario's chin. The Aura Pokémon moved his head to the sides, hoping Chris would strike a good spot.

"Please, don't stop," Lucario growled in pleasure, "it's so good."

But Chris stopped, pulling back his hand. Both the imaginary Riolu and Lucario blinked in shock.

"What kind of fool do you take me for?" Chris asked.

"W-what?" Lucario shook his head. "I-I'm not taking you for a fool! I-I was truly enjoying it!"

The teen cleared his tears and looked serious. "No… No way is this being this easy," he argued. "It does look like you're ashamed, but… I'm sorry, but this is just too much."

Lucario's ears slightly drooped to the sides. "Huh?"

The teen sat up and embraced his body, shivering a bit. "It's going to take some time until I'm sure you're not… lying to me," he said. Lucario's jaw fell in complete disbelief. "We're… we're holding up any lessons for a few days…"

"Why?" Lucario asked. "Why are you doing this to me?"

"It's punishment," Chris said simply. "It's punishment for nearly trying to beat me to death!" he cried. Lucario bowed down his head.

More than a week had passed ever since Lucario came to the real world. A long week of nothing then followed.

Though that week was full of complete dullness that reminded Lucario about his overly stupid threat, there were some changes that weren't unnoticed. Chris was hardly talking to him. His aura expelled waves of anger and shame during silence, two feelings that Lucario constantly found whenever he thought it was the right time to strike a conversation. Moreover, Chris never let him eat anything meat-related. Lucario had vague options. In fact, his breakfast routine was a box of cereal. The first two days, the cereal was good. The next five days, it became boring to even eat it.

Lucario never stopped taking his usual routines. He still took a bath and cleaned his fangs every day. He wanted to prove to Chris that he could do it. The Riolu in him was desperately trying to reach out for the teen. Just one remark, the Riolu would say. Just one remark is all I need from you. I can't take this anymore, he would cry as they saw the teen stubbornly fix the broken door all alone. Luckily, the damage done to the door wasn't as bad as Chris thought, so he managed to use the right tools to put it back together.

Morning and evenings were equally as punishing as any other thing. Chris forbade himself to greet Lucario with a "good morning", and he would just say "morning" instead. Lucario would get lucky if Chris said more than thirty words in a single day before they would go to sleep, at which time the teen would just say "night" to him. Lucario realized he was sitting down in a different position. With his frontal body, he faced Chris, and the teen faced away from him. Just seeing Chris look away reminded Lucario that he would never sleep feeling fine.

Much to Lucario's dismay, a few more days passed. He was going to lose it if Chris ignored him any longer, and just when he thought he couldn't take it anymore one fine Monday morning…

"We're resuming your reading lessons," Chris said without greeting him.

Lucario's tail wagged a bit. He was pleased.

…

" *Cons-ti-tu-tion,* " Lucario read dully.

"Good," Chris said. "Next words are 'is the most important set of rules that define our nation'."

"T-those are many words."

"Recall what I said syllable for syllable as I move my finger over each word."

"O-okay, but… Why?" Lucario asked, looking down at Chris. "Why do we have to be like this?"

"During all these days, I figured out that you're unsettled if I stand close to you," Chris pointed out. "So now, we're going to be sticking real close to each other without going too far with it. That feeling of unsettledness has got to go ASAP."

"B-but… you're practically sitting on my lap."

"I thought this was a thigh?"

Just like before, the two were sitting on the couch, or at least the bigger one was sitting there. The small teen was sitting on Lucario's right thigh as the latter held the book with both hands and Chris leaned back to his blue right arm, as if Chris was sitting on his father's lap. It wasn't the case, though. The stoic look the teen gave to the towering Pokémon meant serious business.

"This is very unsettling," Lucario commented. The Riolu in his mind was having a field day.

"Would you rather push me down?"

"N-no, I won't complain about it," Lucario quickly corrected.

"Good, now resume the reading."

Lucario gulped. He forgot the pronunciation already. Looking stressed, the Aura Pokémon tried his best to recall the words.

Suddenly, a hand was rubbing the top of his head with care. Shocked, he looked at Chris. He was forcing a small smile. "You can do it," Chris muttered. "I know you can."

The Riolu beamed with glee and tried to jump as high as he could. Outside his mind, Lucario felt Chris's aura transmitting waves of happiness. The Aura Pokémon blushed a bit, and he focused his eyes on the words. As he did so, he thought to himself, "(That aura of happiness is back at last… I can still do this right.)"

Lucario admitted that it was a very nice feeling being groomed by the teen. The aura of happiness that went all the way to Chris's hand calmly mixed up with Lucario's own aura, and the bountiful sense felt incredible and soothing. Lucario continued reading. His newly obtained optimistic attitude boosted his chances of reading by himself.

But still, the grooming couldn't just get out of his head. Chris would stop a few times, which greatly saddened Lucario, only for the first to rub his head once it was Lucario's turn to read. Subconsciously, the Riolu waited eagerly each time the teen would stop talking to pet him a little more. Lucario would also wait eagerly, his subconscious taking the better of him. Yet, this wasn't bad. It was a very good feeling. That was all that mattered.

His trainer would never find out, anyway…

Monday's night came, but it looked like the punishment continued due to the fact Lucario had eaten another boring bowl of cereal

earlier that same day. But then, as he lied down on his bed, Chris turned to him and smiled. "Your punishment is over," he said. "Starting tomorrow, you won't be eating the same meals again. Also, you improved your reading a bit, but we're still going to be focusing on it for the next days until you get it right. Otherwise, you'll never enjoy the many things I want to teach you."

The statement was a good welcome, indeed. "Thank goodness," Lucario muttered. "This was just too much for me to handle…"

"Serves you right," Chris said, dropping the smile. "Whatever you're trying so hard to avoid, it's obvious you were snapping out for no good reason." Lucario was tempted to glare at Chris, but he didn't want to prove his point any further. "If you even *dare* do this again… it'll be far worse."

Mind reading was just as tempting, but Lucario held himself back. Chris was terrifying him.

Suddenly, Chris's hand rubbed Lucario's head. Getting a dreamy look, Lucario leaned to the bed and rested his head on his crossed arms. The teen's jaw fell a bit when the two were practically a feet or less away from each other's faces. Chris stopped and pulled his hand away. "You're… you're really getting into this being close to each other thing…"

"(… Aw, screw it,)" Lucario thought, giving up. He opened his eyes and looked away from Chris. The Aura Pokémon blushed as he asked, "… While I try to go to sleep… can you keep rubbing my head?"

"W-wha…?" Chris was astonished at the question.

Lucario blushed deeper. "It… it does feel really nice… I'm being honest," he admitted, hiding a smile behind his thick arms. "Your aura makes your hand soothe my own aura… and it puts me at ease…"

Chris grimaced. "Oh no, that better not mean you're falling in love with m-"

"NO!" Lucario shouted without moving. Chris blinked. "S-sorry, really… N-no, that doesn't mean that, I assure you…" He smiled again. "I just enjoy it very much…"

"…" Chris remained silent, but then he chuckled and rubbed the towering Lucario's head. "Good night, Lucario…"

"(He said good night! He did say good night!)" Lucario rejoiced. The firm bond had been restored. "Good night, Chris…" With a pleased growl, Lucario yawned and closed his eyes, letting the human rub his head. Soon, Lucario drifted off to sleep, and Chris then followed suit. The two were now sleeping, yet their sleeping faces were facing each other. At that very moment, Lucario would say that life was a nice…

… Unfortunately, not everything was right.

It turned out that Lucario's submissive behavior was a way for him to replace Chris for the image of his trainer doing the grooming and teaching. Through his eyes, Lucario saw Chris as his other trainer. Chris was not in the picture. Lucario's trainer was there instead. The Aura Pokémon was heading down through a treacherous path of lies that kept him sane. His consciousness was working on this very hard to hold on to the vague memories for dear life.

The Riolu could only look up at the Lucario and shake his head in shame. Things were not going to be okay. The consciousness that was a tall Lucario shooed the Riolu away. Whimpering, the Riolu stuck out his tongue and ran into the mist, promising to watch the Lucario very closely to convince him to stop lying to himself…

Chris was bound to suffer greatly if he ever found this out down the line.

Just when things look very okay for the two, Lucario has to snap at the worst of times. It looks like things are going to be okay… or are they?

BTW, a lot of "official" artwork for the singular chapters has been released over my DeviantArt and Colors accounts. You can see them all by going there manually or clicking the links at the top of my page here.

I encourage you all to review.

A Hot Summer Day

It's Summer Time! And I totally did not reference a FABULOUS character!

Also, to a certain reviewer, this story is not going a Yaoi one. Rest assured of that.

I encourage Summer fanatics to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 9: A Hot Summer Day

The scorching heat during Tuesday morning was heating the whole house.

Steel-types were never meant to be put under such a dreadful condition. Due to their crippling weakness against Fire-types, heat was not good for their overall health. Having steel body parts that were put under the sun's heat felt very nauseating, as the steel would heat up and continue to linger for even longer unlike normal skin. It was by no means very hurtful, but it was very annoying.

When Chris felt a small budging feeling, he opened his eyes and nearly had a heart attack when Lucario stared directly at him with wide eyes, all the while sweating like crazy. The spot where he was lying his head down on the bed was starting to get wet due to the sweat his body was put under the sun's rays. The Aura Pokémon had noticed too late that he was within the window's reach, therefore, the sun's rays were hitting him with full force. "Oh my… goodness!" Chris said, pushing himself up. "You're sweating!"

"Good morning…" Lucario muttered, his eyes looking up at Chris. "I know… I'm sorry to wake you up like this…"

The teen blinked. He could see how Lucario's body was drenched in his own sweat judging how he had turned slightly darker in color. The

black markings of his body were devoid of wet fur, but it made the sweat very visible to the naked eye. "Uh, stand up!" Chris said, noticing the wet spot of sweat on his bed.

Lucario stood up fully, and he wanted to shake himself off so badly, but he didn't want to spread sweat all over the room. "I…" Lucario trailed off.

Chris looked up to him. "Oh dear god, you're really sweating a lot!" he said in shock. "Are you… ill or something?"

"No…" Lucario shook his head. "It's just… Us Steel-types aren't that great handling fire… and that includes the sun's heat…" He wiped his forehead, only for his arm to get more drenched in his own sweat. "The heat stays in our bodies far longer than any other Pokémon… and thus this is why we're not meant to stay under the sun for a long time…"

"And… you did stay under the sun," Chris said. Lucario closed his eyes in shame and nodded. "Oh… Are you hurt?"

"I'm okay," Lucario reassured him. "The only problem is that… I'm sweating… against my will…"

Once Chris took a small sniff, he nearly lost his vision. Lucario was getting very stinky. "T-this isn't good," he said. "You really need to take a shower immediately…"

Lucario gulped and took a small sniff of his right armpit. "UGH!" he grunted with disgust, pulling his face away. He looked sideways at Chris with a worried look. "I don't want to take a hot shower this time… You understand, right?" he asked.

"Yes… Wait, don't you take hot showers, anyway?" Chris asked.

"You're surely thinking that my body gets too hot with hot water…" Lucario trailed off, facing his face down at the teen. "Look, it's really nice for me to take hot showers. It feels very refreshing to be within

hot steam, unlike getting warmed up by the sun without my consent… And besides… I *stink* ."

"True that…" Chris muttered. The smell was quickly spreading out from the Aura Pokémon. "G-go take a shower, quick!" Chris pleaded. "You're starting to smell!" Lucario blushed embarrassed and made his way out of the room. To Chris's dismay, he saw some glaring, wet paw-pad prints on the floor's mattress… and they followed the Lucario's direction. Worse yet, there was a large spot right where the towering Pokémon had been sitting on. "… Aww, sick!"

A few minutes later…

After having taken a very refreshing shower with warm water, Lucario was having breakfast with Chris. The breakfast of the day was a simple set of scrambled eggs with bacon. The bacon naturally died first before Lucario could even touch the eggs. "I think we should postpone your reading lessons for the day…"

"Why?"

"I think I haven't given you a day where you could rest and enjoy your time doing something really fun," Chris said as he held his fork with a pinched scramble egg close to his mouth. "I got really surprised that you can't handle the hot Summer's heat that good…"

Lucario sighed. "Today is feeling a bit too hot…" he muttered.

"So then…" Chris smiled a bit, "we're going to have to kick back and relax using the air conditioner and… the pool outside."

The Aura Pokémon stared at the teen. "There's a pool outside?" he asked. "I didn't see one before…"

"While you were taking a shower, I went outside to the yard's little storage to dig out my big pool set," Chris pointed out. "It's… not finished yet, so there's a little mess of tubes and other stuff out there…"

Lucario used his aura senses without having his eyes or his body glowing. He could see that there were some block-like tools over the grass outside the house. The aura that engulfed the tools gave them shape for him to tell that tubes were indeed in the yard. "I can see from here the tubes," he said.

"… Wow… You can?" Chris said a bit astonished. "Oh… It must be your aura ability… You know, one of these days, I wish you could tell me more about your aura senses…" He looked a bit excited. "The things I've been teaching you these days really don't compare to what you can do."

"Really?" Lucario asked, his eyes lessening his natural glare while his lips formed a small smile. "But I think your lessons are very enlightening."

The teen blushed a bit. "Oh, please… My lessons deal with mundane activities," he said. "If I were to guess, your side deals with the supernatural…" The two shared a small moment to chuckle together. Within Lucario's mind, the happy Riolu beamed with glee. He really enjoyed the small bonding moment, as he wagged his tail to the sides.

Luckily for Chris, Lucario didn't do a double-take to regret chuckling with him. There was progress there…

"So… will you be showing me your aura abilities someday?" Chris asked.

"I'll be very glad to show you," Lucario said. "Just… as soon as I learn how to use Aura Sphere…"

"… What?" Chris's smile faded away. "You don't know how to use Aura Sphere?"

"… No…" Lucario looked ashamed. "It's weird, though… I can use my aura ability superbly, yet I find myself unable to create a single

small orb to defend myself…" He stared at Chris with a flat look. "I only know Force Palm, Double Team, Feint, and Extremespeed."

Chris didn't recall that he had given the Lucario those four moves. Then again, he didn't recall that this one could potentially destroy the house with one or two punches, and Chris didn't want to find out if Lucario could do that. "I… see…" Chris muttered.

"Feint seems pretty useless, so I'm going to forget that one over Aura Sphere," Lucario said. He looked back at Chris. "Oh… I should probably keep that idea to myself…"

The teen had to object to that thought. "Ooooh, no," Chris said. "Maybe… maybe I can train you."

Lucario's eyes widened. "… You? Training me?" he asked, bewildered at the suggestion.

Chris looked offended. "I-I can try to train you," he said. "I don't think it's THAT hard to train a Pokémon like you."

"But there are no Pokémon or places we can go," Lucario said. "… Unless you're trying to say that you're going to spar with me…"

"L-let me assure you that I'm not suicidal," Chris said with a deadpan look. "You really want to learn Aura Sphere soon. Let me give you a hand in there!" he said, looking worried. "Besides, there's a chance I might get to see a real life Aura Sphere before my own eyes! And since you're a very special Lucario… Think about the possibilities!"

Lucario thought hard about it for a moment. The Riolu inside his mind beamed with glee. The Aura Pokémon thought about the possibilities at hand. He smiled at the thought of being trained, but he wondered how Chris could do it. "… How would you train me?" Lucario asked.

"Well…" Chris trailed off. "I could… impose you some challenges to make you work out… Some challenges that will be up your level…"

"… Fair enough," Lucario said satisfied. "I'll look forward to the day we train together…" he wiped his forehead, "a day that isn't so hot out…"

The teen recalled the actual topic at hand. "Let's get finished with breakfast so that we can set up the pool," he said. "I also need to take a shower, too."

Lucario stared at him. "Wait… I'm going to set up the pool, too?" he asked.

"I think I lied a bit about not making you learn something new today," Chris said. "However, you're helping me out this time with my task. It'll be fun! I've never let you down!"

"I… guess so…" Lucario looked away.

"… Oh…" Chris could tell Lucario felt like he was the one who let him down a week ago. The teen recalled the vivid event a lot in his mind as some sort of warning not to get too carried away with his own actions. "… You've never let me down." Lucario looked in shock at him. "Don't think about it too hard! Whatever happened before… it never happened… and that's that."

"But…"

"No buts, either," he said, forcing a smile. "I'd rather have you talk to me than having to ignore you all day long. After all, you're the only person who gives me that desired company I…" Chris paused for a moment and shook his head. "I don't want to ignore you at all. You're very important to me…"

For a brief moment, Lucario sensed a sudden change in Chris's aura. His aura emitted emotional waves of loneliness and sadness, and it still emitted those waves after forcefully trying to be happy. There was even an inner struggle that told Lucario that the teen was trying so hard to cheer himself up, and the Aura Pokémon nearly pried into Chris's conflicted mind. Even the Riolu wanted to know

what was troubling the human so much that he begged Lucario to go ahead and read his mind a little bit. Alas, Lucario held himself back… but it was very tempting.

"… You don't need to stare me for that long, though."

Lucario snapped out from his thoughts. "Oh, sorry," he said. He went back to eat his breakfast quietly, wishing that there was more bacon to eat.

"(He can read minds…)" Chris thought, looking away from Lucario. "(Oh no, please don't tell me he enters my mind when I'm not noticing. It might really put a stop to my desire to keep him around… No! I can't just do that to him! He's got a will of his own!)" The teen focused hard on his plate while arguing to himself about the possibility of keeping Lucario around.

After waiting for Chris to get out of the shower, the two walked outside where they were greeted by a mess of tubes and a long blue plastic pool waiting to get set up under the scorching heat. Lucario felt the heat, but unlike last time, he was ready to tolerate for the sake of today's task at hand. "I have bad news," Chris said. "I checked the forecast and it says we might have really hot days from now."

"Oh no," Lucario muttered. "The spot where I sleep is facing the window, and that's the direction where the sun rises…"

"I'll have some kind of solution after we have our little fun time with the pool," Chris said, cheering him up.

The Aura Pokémon then realized that the teen wanted him to enter the pool once it was finished. "I'm… entering the pool?" he asked.

"Yes," Chris said. "It's going to be fun and relaxing. Don't make that face! Like I said before, I never… I mean, my lessons always give you a lot of fun. Today is no different."

Lucario forced a smile until an instruction sheet blew over to his right leg. Noticing it, he picked it up and stared at it… His mortal enemies, the letters, were back to haunt him. He shrugged and gave the sheet to Chris. "Here," Lucario said.

"Well, I wasn't really planning in making you read this… Today is hot, after all," Chris said. "Let's begin setting the pool up."

Time passed as the two worked together to set up the pool. Lucario's large hands were not much of a hindrance as he thought, but he still listened to Chris's directions, grabbing tubes and joining them together. The hot sun's rays didn't annoy him until after ten minutes later. He wanted to rest and lean back on the yard's tree. Its shade looked pretty relaxing from the spot where he was. The yard had two trees: one on the upper left corner and another on the lower right corner. The one closest to him was the second one.

Noticing that Lucario was back to rubbing his forehead from sweat, Chris went over to him. "I think you need to relax a little earlier," he said.

"No, it's okay," Lucario said, staring down at him. "We're almost finished."

"It's okay. I can do the rest by myself," the teen reassured him. "Why don't you go sit down under the tree? I'll bring you lemonade."

Lucario didn't want to look like he was a lazy person who left things undone, but Chris's aura told him that the teen didn't care about that. He really was worried. Thanking destiny for having such a forgiving person by his side, Lucario forced a smile and went over to sit down under the tree's shade, staring at Chris going back to the house. The Aura Pokémon leaned his back against the bark and closed his eyes to relax.

The relaxing shade over his body brought him protection against the sun. He let the peaceful aura around his body consume him. The life in the earth felt like a sauna to him, and he was very thankful to be in

such a good spot. He felt even more relaxed when a foreign body of aura approached him from the front and held out some sort of object to him. Whoever it was, the aura was so soothing and enjoyable.

"Uh…"

Lucario's aura senses were replaced by normal eyesight. The body of aura in front of him took shape in the form of Chris holding out a lemonade glass. The Aura Pokémon looked startled. "Oh… Thank you," Lucario muttered, grabbing the glass. While Chris flashed a small smile and went back to finish the pool by himself, Lucario stared his way for a while. "(How could I even think that his aura relaxes me?)" he thought conflicted. "(This never happened before… Why should it happen now? Maybe… maybe I'm over thinking this…)"

Lucario stared down at the glass with lemonade. He actually never had one before. Shrugging, he slowly chugged the liquid down his throat. It was a sweet sour flavor with a cold temperature mixed in. He pulled down his glass and let out a satisfied breath, smiling as the aftertaste filled his mouth. For a moment, Lucario thought that life was good here. If he could be given such a nice treatment by Chris, Lucario would definitely stay behind for as long as he wan-

He gasped to himself after thinking that. The Riolu in his mind, meanwhile, jumped around with joy. Lucario was losing the battle, and the Riolu knew well that his opponent wasn't entirely keeping up the idea of deluding himself with Chris being his other trainer. Delusion wasn't Lucario's strongest area. The Riolu embraced reality with open arms. Why couldn't Lucario embrace reality the same way?

As Lucario kept arguing to himself about what to do, he lost the track of time. He was so busy staring into space that he never saw Chris finishing the pool until he called him over. "Hey, it's done!" Chris said.

Lucario snapped out from his thoughts and stared at Chris. He didn't look like his trainer. Lucario's ears drooped a bit to the sides in

shame, but the Riolu berated him for thinking that. Standing up, the Aura Pokémon went to the teen before looking at the pool.

It was a very wide and tall pool. It was approximately twenty feet of length and five feet of height. It was good enough to have multiple people in there, but with only the two of them there would be enough space.

The only problem was that the pool was empty of water. Lucario arrived just in time to see Chris turn on the water hose. "It's going to take quite some time before it fills up," Chris said. "For now, let's go back inside and wait for it to fill."

"Oh, I see," Lucario said. "Let's go back inside, then. I don't want to be under the sun for any longer." He noticed Chris was sweating.

"Yes, let's," Chris said nodding. "Look forward to the pool time! I'm going to go look for a beach ball we can use to play around."

Raising an eyebrow at the suggestion of using a ball, Lucario followed the teen into the house.

Two hours later of enjoying the air conditioner, the two came back out, seeing the pool filled with water almost to the border. The ray of the sun gave a reflection in it as some water ripples swung to the sides as calmly as possible. Looking to the teen, Lucario saw that Chris had taken off his shirt and changed to red shorts. He was even carrying a set of goggles to use underwater. Lucario, meanwhile, was carrying a large beach ball under his left arm that Chris had inflated.

Chris went to turn the water off, and then he went over to check the water's temperature with a hand. It was slightly warm. "It's ready!" he said before he climbed over a small staircase, jumping into the water right after. Lucario saw the teen rising back up, all wet with the refreshing water. Chuckling, Chris turned to face Lucario. "Come on! The water is really nice!"

Lucario smiled and deliberately jumped a good ten feet into the pool. Chris's smiling look was immediately replaced by a shocked one as the Steel-type fell inside, making a rather huge splash of water that pushed Chris back to the border. Regaining his balance, Chris looked forward to see where Lucario had landed… He was standing up, looking down at the water as he let go of the ball under his arm.

"G-geez," Chris muttered, getting Lucario's attention. "You also have crazy jumping skills?"

"That jump I did back there wasn't my highest jump," Lucario pointed out. "I can show you how big I can jump."

This was a Herculean Lucario. The mere thought that he could probably jump beyond fifty feet into the water made Chris shake his head. "N-no! No more jumps in the pool!" he said.

"I can probably jump over eighty feet, but…" Lucario sighed. Chris stared at him with a bewildered look. "Well… Now what?"

"Now what?" Chris wondered, floating to Lucario's side. "You need to stop standing up. It's clear the pool can't cover your whole body while you're like this."

Lucario looked at the water, and then he slowly sank down by sitting on his legs. He was now a head sticking out from the pool. He turned his face to Chris. "I guess the water feels nice," he said.

"You're reaaaaally tall," Chris said. Lucario preened a little. "Let your body float and try swimming around… You can swim, right?"

"I already come with that skill learned," Lucario said, and he let his body float up before he started to swim around at a slow pace. Chris couldn't stop looking at the fact that the Aura Pokémon's tail was sticking out from the water like a long flag. He started chuckling. "What?" Lucario asked.

"Oh, nothing… It's just your tail is sticking straight up," Chris pointed out, covering his mouth. "It's kind of a cute sight… I mean, it's a funny sight!"

Lucario stared at him before turning to his tail. He blushed slightly and tried to move it down a bit until it was almost barely brushing against the water while he continued swimming around Chris. "Does it look… embarrassing?" he asked.

"Oh no, no!" Chris said, now looking worried that he hurt the tall Pokémon's feelings. "It's just funny. I'm not going to make you never live it down. Don't worry about that."

The Aura Pokémon forced a small smile. He saw Chris putting the goggles on before diving underwater. Blinking, Lucario took a long breath of air and dove down.

The water inside the pool looked far brighter and mystifying. By default, Lucario could sense a lively aura from the body of water itself. Then he sensed Chris's aura. The teen looked shocked at him diving underwater, but then he shook his head and flashed a small smile. Lucario couldn't help but return the expression as well.

Chris was surprised that somebody as heavy as Lucario could float around just fine. Through his goggles, Chris saw Lucario's fur calmly floating to all sides while the four appendages on the back of his head trailed off behind. It was almost as if Lucario was shining with the sun. From afar, the yellow fur looked very pressed against his body, but there was a thick layer of it waiting to be rubbed. The teen didn't understand how that worked exactly. He shrugged the fact off and went over to swim next to Lucario.

Talking underwater was not a good option, so Lucario chose another route: telepathy. "(*It's very beautiful down here,*)" he told Chris.

Not used to have somebody talk to his mind, Chris gasped underwater and started inhaling water by accident. Shocked to see the amount of bubbles, Lucario gasped mentally and pulled the

human from his arm back to the surface, almost out of instinct. Once Chris gasped for oxygen, he looked to Lucario. "H-holy hell!" he exclaimed, smacking his chest. "W-what was *that?!* "

"U-uh…" Lucario was ashamed that he had caused the event. "I-I used telepathy to talk to you underwater…"

Chris coughed. "T-telepathy?" he coughed out. "Y-you can use telepathy, too?"

"Yes, it's easy for me to do that due to my aura skill," Lucario said, his glare lessening into a worried look. "I… I'm sorry I nearly made you drown…"

"N-no…" Chris regained his composure. "I-it's really okay… I was just taken off-guard when I looked up at you and then you started talking without moving your mouth… Wait… I already expected your kind to do that after watching that movie…"

Lucario stared intently at Chris. "A movie?" he wondered.

"Oh, it's nothing you should concern yourself with for now," Chris said. But now Lucario wanted to see where the human got the notion of Lucario using telepathy. "But seriously… Telepathy? You impress me each day!" He smiled at Lucario, despite the fact his life could've been snuffed out. "Try to do that again!"

Lucario blinked in surprise at the eager request. Wanting to see Chris happy, the Aura Pokémon stared. "(*There… Can you hear me? You can talk back to me as long as I'm involved.*)"

Chris's eyes widened after hearing Lucario's deep, gruff voice echoing inside his mind. "(*Oh my freaking holy goodness… Oh god… I can hear my own voice echoing!*)" he thought surprised. Lucario grinned a little bit. "(*T-this is amazing, Lucario! T-telepathy can really be done with you!*)"

"(*Oh, I'm glad you're enjoying it so far,*)" Lucario thought, feeling proud of himself. "(*As long as you're within my a hundred mile radius, I can easily communicate with your mind through telepathy. It is a very handy skill.*)" Lucario could sense Chris's aura radiating a feeling of utter excitement. Whatever shortcoming they had in the past was surely being repaired. The Riolu was very happy that the bond between the two was strengthening by this.

"You're really something!" Chris said through his mouth, abruptly ending the telepathy talk. "I really can't wait for you to show me the full extent of your aura abilities soon!"

The Aura Pokémon felt very proud to see Chris's eager excitement. Not even minding the fact that he was owned by another trainer, Lucario was put in a state where he didn't want to let the teen down no matter what happened. He truly wanted to show Chris his incredible abilities. Moreover… he wanted Chris to train him, as his subconscious - the Riolu - begged him to go ahead with it

"Soon enough, I'll show you everything I can do," Lucario said, absent mildly feeling a bit cocky. "You'll be very impressed with one such as I can do with aura alone."

Chris got a little closer to Lucario, his eyes beaming with glee. "You're a Herculean Lucario. Whatever you have in mind is surely going to blow mine away!" He shook his head and smiled a bit. "But for now, let's go back to diving underwater… It's really fun to talk using your telepathy skill."

"You won't get shocked if I use it underwater?" Lucario asked concerned.

"As long as you don't yell at me…" Chris took a long breath and dove inside the water. As an invitation for him to enter, Lucario did the same and entered the water.

The two looked at each other before looking around at the light of the sun piercing through the calm water. "(*I like how everything looks*

like down here,)" Lucario said. "(*If you could sense the aura, it would be very radiant.*)"

Chris was a bit hesitant to try talking through telepathy underwater, but he tried it again. "(*You're really getting me so anxious about your aura abilities,*)" he said. "(*Come on, let's go swim around.*)"

The Aura Pokémon nodded and the two started swimming right next to each other, occasionally exchanging glances as they circled around the pool. Lucario then felt Chris's hand rubbing his wild fur's back. Using telepathy, he heard Chris chuckling.

"(*It's so messy!*)" Chris said before looking startled, forgetting that they were still using their minds to talk.

Lucario blushed a bit but composed himself to talk. "(*Careful… While we're using telepathy, any thoughts you're thinking will get immediately transferred over our link.)* "

"(*I-I see…*)" Chris pulled his hand back, looking a bit perplexed. "(*I wish I could rub it a little more…*)"

The Aura Pokémon nodded before grimacing at the realization. "(*Uh… I heard that…*)" Lucario was speechless right after.

"(*E-eep!*)" Chris yelped. "(*O-oh no, I can't really control this telepathy thing so well! T-this is so embarrassing!*)"

"(*I wonder who feels more embarrassed of the two. I mean, I kind of like being groomed like that on my back…*)" Lucario then got a look from Chris. He had been cornered at his own game. "(*… Damn it…*)"

Chris chuckled. "(*You can't even hold your thoughts back either!*)" he said.

Lucario's eyes looked away. "(*I-I was taken off-guard,*)" he said in his defense. "(*I forgot we're using telepathy…*)"

"(*You're really funny,*)" Chris said. "(*That's what I like about you.*)"

"(…)" Lucario turned to Chris. "(*Did you…?*)"

The teen looked away, hiding a small smile. "(*I need to catch some more air…*)" He went back up before coming back down. "(*Sorry for that… I so casually let that slip.*)"

"(*Huh,*)" Lucario muttered before going back to get some more air. He went back down and joined Chris's side. "(*Then we better not think other stuff that the other doesn't want to hear… You know… Let's stop using telepathy altogether while we're down here,*)" he suggested. Chris nodded in agreement. "(*The link shall be severed… now.*)"

"(… Can you hear me?)" Chris thought. Lucario stared at him. "(… You're very fluffy!)" he suddenly thought to get his attention, but Lucario looked away with a smile. "(Okay, he does not smile like if I told him that… I guess I'm safe.)" He calmly swam around with Lucario.

"(I really am warming up to him even more,)" Lucario thought. "(But… but this is wrong…)" The Riolu pouted angrily at him. "(I want to delude myself until I can reunite with my trainer… yet my subconscious wants me to…)" The Riolu barked. "(… I… I do enjoy being around Chris, but… but…)"

It was then that Lucario felt a hand rubbing one of his four appendages on the back of his head. Without looking startled, he saw Chris playing with one until he looked shocked at the towering Pokémon and pulled back his hand. "(S-stop doing that!)" Chris told himself. "(You're getting carried away! He's not going to be your Pokémon as long as you keep doing this out of the blue!)"

Lucario suddenly picked up an aura of loneliness. "(I wonder why he's showing that emotion now…)" he thought. "(… Maybe he really is lonely…)" He went back up to the surface, standing up.

The Aura Pokémon stopped to think about the aura he picked up. Further examining it, the intensity of the lonely emotion ran far deeper into Chris's soul than he thought. He didn't want to read Chris's mind and find out the source of the emotion. It was considered as rude of him to go that far. However, Lucario had formed a bond with the human. That bond tied Chris's aura to him, and the nagging sense of feeling a negative aura bothered Lucario a lot.

At the same time, the emotion of solitude was the hardest aura he could try to repair using mundane methods that meant a lot to others. The mundane methods weren't even unimportant to him, but he feared that the solution for fixing the lonely aura was to sacrifice himself by not ever leaving Chris's side. That was very hard, he thought. It meant that he needed to stay by the human's side for a very long period of time till that aura went away.

Yet he knew that the feeling of solitude would immediately come back to haunt Chris the moment Lucario were to leave forever. The Riolu nagged at him to accept Chris as his true train-

Chris suddenly rose back up to catch some air before looking up at Lucario. "Did you get bored already?" he asked, his aura transmitting concern.

"Oh…" Lucario snapped out from his thoughts. "No, I'm just getting some air, that's all."

"I see… I thought you were thinking about something else because you're standing up," Chris pointed out. He really didn't need to read minds. "Eh, I'm probably thinking other stuff…" He forced a smile as he picked the floating beach ball. "Do you want to play with me?"

Lucario stared at the large beach ball. "How?" he asked.

"Let's hit the ball back and forth from each side of the pool," Chris said, swimming back to the corner of the pool. Lucario looked over his shoulder and walked to the opposite corner, calmly sinking back.

He turned around and nodded at Chris, unsure if this was going to distract his conflicting thoughts.

It turned out his mind was distracted before long.

A few laughs were had as a beach ball soar the air above the pool. Keeping his incredible strength in check, Lucario's full attention was on the ball as he calmly hit it back using a palm. Seeing Chris's happy expression, the aura of loneliness had left him. It was a good feeling for Lucario to see the human beaming with glee once more. Without thinking, the beach ball flew a little further back, making Lucario gasp as he pulled back. The ball ended up getting caught right between his forehead and ears, causing Chris to laugh.

Lucario returned the expression and picked the ball from his head. And thus, the afternoon went by…

The Aura Pokémon feared that he was going to sweat like crazy the next hot morning, but Chris had found a solution. He closed the window with the blue curtains, and he also turned on the air conditioner. The room was now cool enough to refresh the two. The relaxed expression on Lucario's face meant that success has been obtained.

"It feels so nice in here," Lucario said, sitting down and facing the bed. "I won't have to worry about sweating all over."

Chris chuckled heartily. "We can go back to have fun in the water tomorrow if you want," he said.

"Thanks, but I'll rather have you teach me something else," Lucario said, lying his head and arms down on the side of the bed. Chris had fortunately cleaned the rather embarrassing wet spot of sweat by now. The spot Lucario lied down on smelled fresh. "What else do you have in mind?"

"I think we're going to spend a lot of time trying to make you learn how to read," Chris said. The Aura Pokémon groaned loudly in his

mind. "After you learn how to read, a lot of things are going to open up to you."

Suddenly, Lucario really wanted to learn how to read so desperately. "If you put it that way…" he muttered, smiling a bit.

"… What do you mean, if I put it that way?" Chris asked, looking suspicious.

Lucario looked hesitant. "N-nothing," he said.

"… Oh well, whatever floats your boat," Chris said as he lied down on his bed, ignoring the confused look Lucario gave him after hearing the weird-sounding expression. The teen chuckled and smiled warmly at his guest. "Well, good night, Lucario."

"No, wait," Lucario stopped Chris from closing his eyes. "I… Uh… Can you… rub my head again while I try to sleep?"

The teen was surprised to hear the odd request again. "Again?" he said.

"I…" Lucario looked away, hiding a small smile behind his arms. "I really do like it…"

"… You're funny," Chris said, his hand now rubbing Lucario's head with care. The Aura Pokémon growled silently. "I think I said that before."

He was enjoying it too much. The Aura Pokémon, however, chuckled against stopping his fun time. "Maybe I like being funny," Lucario muttered, pleased as he let the human groom him as he went to sleep. "(Oh yes, I can get used to this for as long as I want…) Good night… Chris…"

The Riolu inside Lucario's mind, meanwhile, wagged his little tail to the sides as he lied down on the cloudy mist and yawned with a high-pitched growl. He curled up into a ball and fell asleep with a

small smile. The next day was sure to be filled with lots of fun, he said.

…

Maybe he could coax Lucario to hug the human, and probably even nudge his face with his muzzle. Riolu felt fuzzy and happy just thinking about doing it. Before long, everyone fell asleep. Tomorrow was sure to be enjoyable…

Wait till you see the next chapter. There are more surprised to be had…

It seems my art has evolved with the latest piece of artwork. Maybe I'm thinking of going the extra mile and use Flipnote Hatena to make some…"episodes"…

Please do review. :)

A Movie Night

I felt like I dodged a big opportunity when I simply skipped the part of these two watching a movie together. So, here's a nice replacement that fulfills that missed chance.

From now on, the newly-introduced chapters shall be given short summaries in the main summary of the story. At the end of the story, the summary will regain its permanent description.

I encourage all movie fanatics to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 10: A Movie Night

The hot summer season was still at large, Lucario could tell once he woke up to feel the room's temperature. Luckily, the air conditioner made the room feel refreshing instead of unnecessarily warm. Thus, he managed to avoid sweating so much and, even better, stink. He didn't want to look so ridiculous in front of the only person who was taking care of him day by day.

Shrugging at the thought of sweat, Lucario focused on the teen lying down on the bed. He was sleeping still, but Lucario wanted to see what else he would learn. Unfortunately, he had a guess: reading. If he read another book, he was going to fall asleep. He briefly thought that letters shouldn't have been made in the first place. He also thought that talking was just enough, but apparently reading was a dire life skill. The Riolu inside of him pouted at him, feeling that he should suck it up.

Chris's yawn snapped Lucario out of his thoughts. "Good morning…" Chris muttered.

"Good morning," Lucario said, flashing a small smile. "I didn't wake up sweating this time. Thank you."

"Oh, I see…" Chris said, glad that he wasn't going to clean a sweating spot on the floor again. "That takes care of it."

Lucario nodded. "So after breakfast, what are we going to do?" he asked, sounding a bit eager. The teen could tell that the aura wielder was slowly defrosting his supposed cold indifference.

"You're going back to reading, of course." Lucario groaned mentally while in the outside he simply stared at Chris with a small hint of disbelief. "Like I told you before, you need to learn how to read to enjoy the rest of the lessons I have in mind…"

Shaking the thought that Chris was secretly torturing him for the unfortunate event days ago, Lucario nodded. Though he did recall that he was convinced to learn how to read, Lucario's conviction was fading away. "I hope I can get the hang of it soon," he muttered, sounding a tad depressed.

"It's… proving to be a difficult lesson for you," Chris began, "but with some dedication, you'll learn very soon. You can do it."

Lucario looked at Chris and smiled. "Thank you for your support," he said. The teen chuckled heartily, and the Riolu beamed with glee. "I'm kind of getting used to having fun instead of training… but it's not like I don't want to train soon."

"Oh, I'll try training you soon enough," Chris said. "I really look forward to that day. For now, you're going back to reading."

The day was not going to be good.

Before he knew it, the day went by to Lucario as he struggled to fend off thousands of letters laughing at his face. He was told by Chris to read the same book he started off with. Because he frequently kept forgetting the pronunciation of certain words, Lucario could only growl in defiance. Chris felt so sorry for him that he helped the big Anubis-like Pokémon read correctly. The end result was Lucario

falling asleep and resting his face on Chris's head. Both got startled and immediately regained their focus on the book.

It was getting late now. It was early night, and Lucario started to show promise of being a newbie reader. All that mattered to him was to finish the dreadful book and get to the good stuff, whatever it was. The teen didn't let him down with his interesting lessons so Lucario was excited all the same; excited about tossing the book far away from his sight.

The two were sitting down on the couch of the living room. As Lucario closed the book, Chris said, "Good job, Lucario! You've gotten a little farther into reading!"

Lucario preened a bit. "The words don't seem to laugh at my face," he said, to which Chris gave him a weird look. "Uh, I mean, they're not so hard to read anymore."

"Okay… Your weird imagination aside, I think you deserve a gift to reward your efforts."

This took the tall Aura Pokémon by surprise. A gift? What would Chris give to him? The closest thing that Lucario thought was a heavy dumbbell, but it didn't seem true. "A gift?" Lucario wondered.

"Yes," Chris said, smiling up at him. "It's related to the TV, except even better… I think." He stood up and walked back to his room. "Wait right there for a bit."

Lucario stared at the teen until he disappeared from sight. Blinking, he faced forward and noticed the widescreen TV sitting directly in front of the couch. He had seen some TV programs before. But what else was there for him to see? Before, he would mindlessly switch channels to find something interesting. If he knew how to read, he would have certainly found something good, but this wasn't the case. When he realized that he could read a bit, Lucario thought that he would read descriptions better.

Reading was really a necessary skill after all, he thought.

As he stared at his reflection on the TV, Chris came back, carrying a small box. The Lucario looked at him and then at the box.

… Wait, that character on the box wasn't…

Lucario's eyes widened. On the box Chris had brought, there was a fierce-looking Lucario about to use an Aura Sphere, as a wide assortment of characters surrounded it. He could spy a Pikachu and some kid, for example, along with some others he didn't know about. "That's… a Lucario," Lucario said. On the box's cover, he could read, "Lucario & the Mystery of Mew."

"I think it's about time you get to see a movie," Chris said, smiling a bit. "Let this be your reward for working so hard in your lessons."

The Aura Pokémon wasn't very familiar with movies. He was a little familiar with TV programs, but a movie was a bit unheard of to him. The fact the first movie he was going to watch had a Lucario in it really piqued his interest even more. "Are we going to watch it?"

"Yes," Chris said. "It's really going to be so exciting!" There was a positive change in his aura that Lucario sensed right away. It was overflowing with happiness. "I mean, getting a real Pokémon like you watch one of your own through this way… I can hardly believe that this is happening!"

"Uh…" Lucario stared at the teen for a long time.

Chris blinked. "What?"

"It's just… Your aura was radiating such positive waves that I got surprised after sensing them…"

"…" The teen blushed. "U-um, I see…" he sheepishly said. "(I guess I got a bit too carried away with the idea of showing him this particular movie… How embarrassing…)"

Lucario looked back at the box. "… So, are we watching that now?" he asked. "I want to see another Lucario. I hardly got to see any back in my home…" He wasn't too sure about any memories he had of his world. Lucario blamed himself that his memories of the past were a mystery to him.

In fact, his memories of his trainer were not even there. This shocked him a lot. The Riolu in his mind had a feeling that Lucario had no life before he was pulled out from the video game through a twisted play of fate, but the Aura Pokémon knew full well that, as a Pokémon, his destiny was to go back to Sinnoh and reunite with his trainer.

The trainer he vaguely knew.

Hearing something open outside his train of thoughts, Lucario blinked and saw Chris crouching down in front of the TV, inserting a disc into a machine. Pressing Play, the teen chuckled and went over to sit next to Lucario, grabbing a nearby controller to turn the TV back to life. "I hope you like this movie," Chris said. He gasped and then stood up as the movie started. "Oh, that reminds me… I purposely didn't say what we were going to eat to make this look like a surprise. I'm going to feed you… I mean, hand you over some new food." He walked off to the kitchen, turning the lights off so that the TV's light shone on the furniture.

Lucario was a bit amazed that he was doing this. Here he was, a serious Pokémon doing a mundane activity that proved to be entertaining. Truly, Pokémon like him were missing a lot, but he wondered if there were others like him that could do the same things he did. His Herculean strength was surely not shared among others, but could they hold forks and eat human food just fine? Chris had said he was special in many ways…

" **Pi-ka!** "

Startled by the noise, Lucario saw an image of a Pikachu on the TV. For a moment, he thought one was somewhere in the house. Soon,

the movie started…

There was a raging war between two armies. And from far away, a figure was jumping from boulder to boulder. It was the Lucario he had seen. Blinking at seeing another one of his species, the Lucario in the real world leaned forward for a bit. He saw the Lucario use his aura to examine the landscape, which was covered in a thick dust cloud that prevented normal sight to see through. The Lucario picked up a massive amount of auras: two warring armies fighting each other.

Stopping, the Lucario went over to a crystal. He placed a hand on it to communicate to somebody; someone named Sir Aaron in a far away castle. The man wearing some particular clothes talked to him before he went over to climb a Pidgeot, trying to go fly over to the battlefield to prevent damage to the sacred tree far away.

Lucario saw his fellow individual being attacked by three Houndoom. After trying to lose them, the Lucario found himself cornered, but then he formed a blue sphere with a single palm, firing off an Aura Sphere.

"That was… an Aura Sphere," Lucario breathed out, seeing the Lucario shooting an Aura Sphere to each Houndoom standing to his sides. Seeing the other Lucario use the signature move, Lucario felt undermined; jealous, even, to see another one like himself pull out the move without much trouble. He clenched his hands, but his full attention was drawn to the TV again.

Lucario saw Sir Aaron being ambushed by Skarmory. After trying to fend them off, the young man leapt down to find the other Lucario. The man told his loyal partner that he alone needed to go to the tree, but the other Lucario protested to go with him. The Lucario in the real world widened his eyes as he saw the man toss his scepter right in front of the other Aura Pokémon, capturing his very soul and body inside the sphere on top of the scepter.

From there, a Ho-oh Lucario had seen went to the tree, where it transformed into Mew, revealing its true form. The tree then began to glow brightly in a green light that spread out to the who-

"I brought you some soda and popcorn!"

Lucario shook his head, startled, and looked to his left. He saw an optimistic Chris holding two glasses with soda with his hands and a large bucket that contained some sort of puffy-looking things that fell down to the sides. Lucario looked back at the movie before Chris carefully put a glass in front of him. "U-um, for me?" Lucario asked. He was completely drawn to the movie to care about anything else. Realizing this, he gasped and took the glass without a second thought.

Then he realized that he had never drunk soda before. Distracted by the glass of soda in his hand, Lucario looked at Chris sitting next to him, putting the bucket between them. "I've never given you soda before," Chris pointed out. "I hope Pokémon don't get sick drinking it…"

Ignoring a woman reading a story to her daughter in the movie, Lucario stared at the dark brown liquid inside the glass that felt small in his large hand. He could spot bubbles surfacing on top, and he for a moment thought that the beverage was poison. He was a Steel-type, so poison was useless against him. Even then, Chris would never poison him. There was no malice whatsoever in his aura. Shrugging, Lucario carefully took a sip.

His eyes widened a bit, and Chris wasn't looking at the movie to see his reaction just to be sure that he hadn't committed a mistake.

"… How is it?" Chris asked, as the movie started to display its title.

Lucario moved his head down and sighed silently. "It's… very good," he said, a small smile forming on his lips. He quickly licked them. "This is really good."

Chris looked happy. "Oh, I'm so glad it did," he said. "Don't worry about drinking too much. There's a lot of soda in the fridge, not to mention the popcorn."

"Popcorn?" Lucario looked back at the bucket sitting between them. He smelled a faint butter flavor that he was not very familiar with. The movie was now showing a group of four characters and a Pikachu walking through the large bridge that led to the town that was connected to the castle.

The young teen picked three pieces of popcorn and ate them. "Go ahead!" he said. "If you liked the soda, you'll like this as well."

Lucario thought that he was energized just drinking the soda, and then he thought that Chris was possibly training him by giving him food. Looking optimistic himself, Lucario grabbed quite a handful of popcorn with a free hand and tried his best to eat it all in one go. He failed miserably since half of it fell to his sides.

As for the popcorn that did get in, he munched it. The popcorn gave away easily to his fangs, and he could hear some small, squeaky noises as he crunched them. The butter calmly spread to his tongue, where he tasted a nice flavor. It wasn't as plentiful as the steaks he had eaten, but it wasn't so bad. "Hmm, it's good," Lucario said, nodding to Chris.

"Sweet," Chris said, looking a bit dismayed at the popcorn on Lucario's lap. "But… be careful not to make a mess with it. Don't try to grab too much popcorn."

Embarrassed that there was a mess of popcorn on his lap, Lucario blushed a bit and stared down at the mess. Thinking that it would look unsanitary to just put the popcorn back to the bucket, Lucario shyly took each piece and eat it. When he noticed that Chris was looking at him, he blinked, and Chris then chuckled. While Lucario chuckled back, the Riolu in his mind laughed. After teaching him how to eat and drink while watching the movie, the two resumed watching.

A little time later after watching the introductory scene, Lucario was curious about the trainer and his Pikachu that were shown prominently in the movie. "Chris, I don't want to lose time asking this, but…"

Chris knew that Lucario would ask questions during the movie, so he used the control to pause it. Lucario felt thankful that there was such an option to pause the movie itself. "Yes?" Chris said.

"Why are the kid and the Pikachu shown a lot?"

"Oh, you mean Ash and Pikachu…" Chris nodded. "Well, you see, I don't believe you haven't seen the anime series for Pokémon, right?"

Lucario was confused about the statement. "Anime… series?"

"You know, the stuff with pure action you saw on TV on occasion," the teen pointed out. "There's a whole program for Pokémon where these two in the movie are the main characters."

"I see…" Lucario made a mental note about searching for the program.

"Except, well, Ash is kind of like the face of the anime. He will never, EVER leave the position. He's been through three different regions," Chris explained. "It's been like seven or so years ever since Pokémon came to be what it is today. And his Pikachu, who refuses to evolve, is pretty much the main mascot of the whole franchise. When I say franchise, I mean Pokémon."

The Aura Pokémon grimaced, his hand lifelessly putting popcorn in his mouth. Chris miraculously ignored how he had turned into a TV of sorts. "His Pikachu refuses to evolve?" Lucario questioned. "That's… a bit ridiculous. He basically does not want to get stronger. Surely, though, this Ash person wants to get powerful Pokémon like all other trainers, right?"

Chris made a face.

"… Unbelievable," Lucario muttered. "I can't believe a trainer doesn't want to evolve their Pokémon… At least he evolves his other Pokémon, right?"

Chris hung his head down a bit.

"… I… feel so much pity for him," Lucario said. "… Well, since he is the face of… the anime, I think, that means he's at least a competent trainer who wins the leagues he participates, right?"

Chris chuckled nervously.

"…" The Aura Pokémon was wondering why this Ash was even so important to care about. "… Why do people even like him?"

"No idea," Chris admitted. "And me? I just don't have anything else to watch Saturday mornings other than the anime… In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if the program got high ratings just because the programming block sucks compared to the decency the anime has compared to all of them, which the anime just barely holds up to everything else."

Lucario stared at Chris. "Why would *you* put yourself through that?"

"Blame the fact I'm blissfully wishing that Ash gets to win a league at last," Chris explained. "But I don't think the people that make the anime would make him suck so bad for the Hoenn region or the Sinnoh region. If he doesn't win any of those two, then… I will completely lose hope and ignore whatever else they come up with. I just can't stand supporting such a loser while I can clear said leagues very easily like any other guy… Of course, I only play the games, but still…"

"That is… such a dramatic way to put it, I admit," Lucario said, drinking his soda.

"Indeed. That answers your question?" Lucario nodded. "Okay, then let's go back to watch the movie. At least it won't suck." Lucario

nodded once more and the movie resumed.

The two watched a ball commencing after seeing Ash hear a mysterious voice coming out from somewhere. Lucario could tell it came from the scepter, which was the same scepter that held the other Lucario. Later on, the characters' Pokémon snuck out to the attic to do their own stuff. As the ball continued, Ash was prohibited to eat food because it would not be something a hero would do.

"Oh, please," Lucario said, rolling his eyes. "A hero is not allowed to eat food. It's like they want him to starve."

Chris stifled a small chuckle. "I-I guess you could put it that way…" The teen was amazed that Lucario could comment on those small, harmless moments with so much snarkyness to back it up. There was more to Lucario than met the eye, Chris thought.

The time passed as the duo watched the events unfold. Lucario got a bit depressed that he had finished his soda already, but there was a lot of popcorn left. Chris offered to go get him some more, and Lucario nodded in appreciation, handing his empty glass to the teen. Once Chris came back with a cold soda drink, he arrived just in time to see Ash stand up to do the hero's pose like in the big picturesque wall next to him.

Suddenly, the scepter reacted violently, and a light shot out to the other side of the room to reveal that the Lucario had been released. Lucario blinked once he saw the other Lucario using his aura ability to sense the surrounding areas. He then focused on Ash's aura, which was apparently the same wavelength as Aaron's aura.

Lucario had learned through watching that a specific button on the control would stop the movie. When he looked down at it, he found the word "pause" under a button, and he pressed it. For a brief moment, he relished that his reading skill allowed him to complete a task by himself without Chris's aid. He felt proud. "Why did you stop the movie?" Chris asked. "… Oh, wait, you stopped it by yourself without explanations? You're learning fast!"

The Aura Pokémon looked proud, but he thought that he could pause the movie to ask questions so that he wouldn't interrupt with his voice. With that in mind, he felt thankful. "I wanted to point out that aura does not work that way," Lucario said, looking a bit upset.

"What?"

"That Lucario… He just said that Ash's aura was the same as Sir Aaron's," Lucario said. He shook his head as he said, "The aura for each individual is different, but at times it can be similar. Yet, he claims those two have the same aura."

"I… see…" Chris trailed off, confused a bit. But Lucario moved on with his explanation.

"Of course, auras can be passed down to others in a family," Lucario said. "The child of a parent may have almost the same aura wavelength, but not completely the same. As a Lucario, though, I can easily discern what auras are brought about by their origin… So, if you were to put me in the middle of a crowd, I would tell you which auras came from other people in my range."

Chris was still confused, but he listened intently. "Uh, wow, that's incredible," he said.

"…" Lucario looked back at the TV. "However, I don't really believe how there can be two same auras… Even if there were two clones, both wouldn't have the same auras…"

The teen wanted to find some answer for the Pokémon's doubt. "… Maybe reincarnation happened?"

"… I don't believe too much in reincarnation myself…" Lucario shook his head. "Um, maybe I'm being too nitpicky about this… Oh well, let's continue watching the movie. Maybe there's a believable explanation."

At this, Chris sighed and said, "I wouldn't be surprised if Ash was once again the hero of a prophecy for the umpteenth time."

"… Fiction can be so illogical, so…" Lucario sighed. "What a cheap way of explaining things… Is this what my expertise has become? A mere thing that has some unbelievable explanations that makes no sense whatsoever?"

Chris patted the Lucario's back. "Believe me. This is just the tip of the iceberg."

"…"

"Which I mean that this is just the beginning."

"Oh, Arceus…" Lucario didn't know what button to press to resume the movie. After a moment of silence, Chris pressed Play. Lucario mentally remembered which button that was, said button not having the word Play. The Pokémon thought the controller was also being cheap to him.

The duo came to the scene where the confused Lucario ran outside to examine his new surroundings. He camr upon a hall where he was confronted by the others about his doubts. Case in point, it ended with the Lucario being hugged by the princess. Then, the movie paused thanks to Chris, keeping the shot of the Lucario looking away in complete and utter shock. "I wonder if you'd react just like that if a girl were to hug you," Chris wondered with a sly smile.

"I would probably end up stabbing her with my chest spike," Lucario said, looking at his chest spike, "and possibly kill her."

"… Way to kill the mood… instead."

Lucario closed his eyes. "Hugging me… is out of the question," he simply said, and the movie resumed.

Luckily, it turned out that Ash had a similar aura pattern like Aaron.

"Oh, thank goodness," Lucario said without pausing the movie. "I lost faith in this for a moment."

Then, shortly, the group was informed by Max about a sudden attack in the attic that deprived Pikachu (and an annoying Meowth as Lucario thought) from the castle due to Mew's appearance taking them both far away to the Tree of World's Beginning. To further explain the events, the one who owned the Weavile that attacked them, a woman named Kid, added up the case with her explanations.

"… Wait," Lucario paused the movie and looked at Chris, "she caused the whole problem with her Weavile in the first place and yet she doesn't mention that?"

"Here's a spoiler…" Chris trailed off. "She never does bring that up."

"… All for the sake of looking good," Lucario said, frowning. "I hope that Lucario picks a negative wave from her."

"He pretty much seems to dislike everyone."

"Just my luck…"

During the night, the Lucario entered an unlit ball room where he stared at some tapestries of Sir Aaron. He suddenly jumped to the wall to hide from a presence. Ash then came into the hall before the Lucario pinned him down. After Ash complained to him, the Lucario got off and explained to him that he was upset about Sir Aaron leaving him behind without any reason.

"…" Lucario could feel a little bit of empathy, relating how he himself got into a similar situation. He sighed mentally as he glanced at Chris for a little while. But he was actually enjoying his time in the real world along with Chris's company, not unlike the other Lucario.

There was a difference between the two of them beyond their physical attributes.

A small while later, the duo watched the team going to the tree to find Pikachu. During their trip, they took a break to eat lunch while the Lucario sat on a boulder away from them, eating some nearby berries. The movie paused thanks to Chris. "I'm so glad that you're not like him," Chris said. "I really like how social you are when you're not angry."

Lucario smiled a bit. "Thanks," he said. The movie resumed, though the Riolu rejoiced how Lucario felt about the little remark.

They saw the team stopping in front of an area full of geysers and steaming water. Wanting to have fun, they went there to relax a little more before reaching the tree. Lucario watched as the other Lucario had a vivid memory of Sir Aaron and himself enjoying a break at the hot springs too. Suddenly, the memory was interrupted by Ash telling the Lucario to join them, but he responded by scoffing and walking away from the group.

"He really is missing a lot," Lucario said without stopping the movie, drinking from his soda and eating popcorn. "Has he ever taken a bath, I wonder? It feels just like that."

"Yes, he's missing a lot," Chris said, smiling at Lucario. "And you're getting into a lot of stuff later on as the days pass."

The Aura Pokémon felt excited about what other things there were for him to learn. Surely, the other Lucario was never going to get the chance.

The two watched the movie. During another night, Ash said to the group that tomorrow was going to be the day he'd get Pikachu back, to which the Lucario commented that he should just leave Pikachu since he is somehow related to Sir Aaron. Angered by this, Ash tackled Lucario down to a hill and into a pond where the two started

fighting each other. After a struggle, the Lucario walked off, saying that people are just as cruel as ever.

Lucario paused the movie, recalling back how he almost hurt - and possibly killed - Chris several days ago. He grunted, frowning at the memory. "After seeing that scene… it made me think about…"

Chris had a nagging feeling that told him that Lucario was thinking about the frightful event. "Please… Don't let it trouble you any longer," Chris said, sounding worried. "It's already a thing of the past. The two of us got better in the end."

"…" Lucario stared worried at Chris. "You truly don't feel scared of me anymore?"

"… A… bit…" Chris managed to say, not content with the answer. "… But still, you're just… very likeable that makes me forget about that." He forced a smile. "You're still awesome to me."

The Aura Pokémon flashed a small smile. The Riolu inside of him looked sharp, serious about keeping the teen safe at all costs from his older self.

The movie continued, showing the Lucario having a memory where he and Sir Aaron trained together. He had his eyes covered with a piece of cloth as swinging logs tried to push him back. But without using his sight or hearing, the Lucario used his fresh aura senses to avoid the logs.

Lucario blinked, watching the training with intent. Suddenly, he grabbed the remote and paused the movie. "That is a kind of training I wish to do," he said. "My aura acts like a sixth sense that lets me sense incoming movements just as long as I have the skill in play."

Chris tilted his head. "What do you mean by having your skill in play?" he asked.

"I don't have my aura sense active all the time because I don't want to unwillingly read other people's emotions and their clouded minds," Lucario pointed out, drinking his soda. "However, it does activate by itself if there is danger coming my way, and I have good reflexes for such occasions…" He stared at the still image on the screen. He recalled that Chris wanted to train him. "… Do you think it'd be possible for you to give me training like that?"

The teen thought about the possibilities. "I suppose there are some similar ways I could give to you…" he trailed off, thinking about said ways. He smiled a bit and nodded. "Soon enough, I'll have you dodging bricks or something. It'll be a sight to watch."

Lucario chuckled confidently. As the movie resumed, he felt that his stomach was getting filled up… He wasn't eating too much popcorn, and he didn't know why his stomach bloated a bit. He just shrugged and asked Chris to go get some more soda for him. The teen complied and did as he was told to. When he returned, Lucario had seen the infamous chocolate scene.

"I think he is starting to open up to others," Lucario said. "He ate a chocolate from Max and smiled for a moment."

"Do you want to eat chocolate?" Chris asked, taking out a chocolate bar.

Lucario blinked at the open candy. Instead of taking the soda, he went straight for the brown item. Smelling it a bit, he found no taste, but he bit a small chunk of it. The chocolate melted inside his warm mouth, and he liked the strong but sweet taste that washed over his tongue. "Hmm, it's also very good," Lucario said.

"Just be careful not to eat too much of it," Chris said. "It kind of puts a lot of weight on you… and I'm not so sure if Pokémon can get rashes."

"…" Lucario put the chocolate away on the table. "In that case… I think I won't eat it too much." The teen chuckled, and Lucario smiled

back.

It's been a few weeks, and Lucario was starting to notice how close he was growing to Chris. It felt wrong to him that Chris wasn't his trainer, yet the Riolu inside his mind was extremely grateful and happy to be with the teen. All the stuff he was learning every day was very entertaining… and fun, even. The memories of his home were slowly being replaced by his new experiences.

Those vague memories of his original trainer still held their spot fervently… but were those memories important?

Lucario gasped mentally, and he decided to focus back on the movie.

The movie reached a point where Ash had heard Pikachu's voice. Getting out from Kid's car, he found the Lucario on a rock. The two engaged on a conversation about how Ash and Pikachu were inseparable friends for life; a theme that the Lucario didn't understand because of how he felt that Sir Aaron treated him like a servant instead of a friend.

Lucario didn't want to pause the movie after listening to that scene. He looked away, a worried look creeping on his face. He and his trainer were supposed to be inseparable, yet there he was, sitting next to a friendly person who wished the best for him. If he were to compare the situations between he and the other Lucario, he would most definitely say that not everything was so bad and that he was having so much fun being around Chris. But his heart ached for returning to Sinnoh with his trainer… Why was the Riolu barking at him now?

Lucario barely ignored the scene where the other Lucario activated a Time Flower to watch the event that deprived him of his freedom during the war. Horrified at the scene as the warring armies surrounded them, the Lucario started throwing Aura Spheres everywhere before Ash yelled at him to stop. Things calmed down as the Time Flower stopped, Ash apologizing to Lucario for all the

things he said to him. Surprisingly, the Lucario smiled and agreed with Ash on his notion that Sir Aaron did the best for him.

Then, Lucario decided to pause the movie, reflecting on what the Lucario had said. "… Chris…" Lucario looked down at the teen. "… Do you think it was for my own good to be here in this world?"

"I… Uh…" Chris looked a bit sad. "That's… I don't know…"

Lucario shook his head. "Please, you must have an answer," he said. "After hearing him say that it was for his own good, I quickly started to wonder if it's for my own good to be here… with you." He secretly emphasized the last two words greatly, but it was the Riolu's doing.

"… Look," Chris said, falling silent for a moment. "… If you want my honest opinion… I'd say that… you were given an opportunity to experience a new life. Sure, you kind of got dragged into this without your consent, just like the Lucario in the movie, but…" He fell silent once more as Lucario stared down with a worried expression at him. "… Let me ask you this, Lucario. Do you like being here, even if that doesn't… necessarily mean that you don't want to stay in this world any longer to return back to your world?"

Lucario thought hard about the question, though part of him told him that a positive answer would hurt Chris's feelings after hearing the second part of the question. "… I… I do like it here," Lucario admitted. "…" He shook his head and looked serious. "However, if there's no way to go back to my world, I won't complain about it."

Chris blinked. "What?"

Lucario forced a smile. "You are…" He wanted to say, "You are a very precious person to me just to leave behind," but he corrected the rest of his statement. "You are very important to me."

Thinking again, his corrected statement sounded awfully close to what he avoided to say. He beat himself up a bit, but the Riolu

rejoiced loudly as he hopped on his spot.

"… Oh… Um…" Chris blushed embarrassed, a smile coming up to his lips. He looked away. "T-that's a nice reason, I think… Seriously? Are you being serious?" He shook his head. "I can't just be the reason you want to stay here anyway…"

"A-ah, you're… probably right," Lucario admitted, blushing in embarrassment. "M-maybe I like that many lessons you're teaching me." His new statement just seemed to reinforce the fact that he wanted to stay in the real world. The Riolu laughed with glee.

"… H-hey, let's not ignore the movie," Chris said. Lucario agreed and the movie resumed. Chris's hand tried to grab some popcorn, but Lucario quickly burrowed his large hand in the bucket. The teen gasped and quickly laughed a bit as Lucario chuckled.

Several minutes later into the movie, there was a lot of action involved as the group had moved into the tree's innards, where it turned out that it was being guarded by the Regi Trio. Furthermore, the tree had a very morbid defense system: red blobs that consumed all intruders into nothingness.

Lucario shuddered. He liked the action very much, but the fact that the red blobs were getting rid of people frightened him a bit. The Pokémon were left unharmed, but still… "And… this is supposed to be a children's movie?" he asked.

"You should play the Kirby games," Chris said. Lucario looked confused at the suggestion, but they went back to watching the movie.

Ash and Pikachu were reunited once more, and Ash presented his Pokémon to Lucario, who started to understand the deeper relationship between human and Pokémon from the two close friends. Later on, the moving scene was broken once Ash was swallowed by the red blobs. Just then, Mew watched the Pokémon lamenting their loss, and so it used its power to stop the security

system of the tree, bringing everyone consumed by the blobs back out from the innards.

Sadly, Mew had taken quite a lot of energy trying to stop the system, and so the tree's crystals turned bright red. Lucario listened to the fact that the tree became unstable due to Mew's meddling, and now the tree's demise would dispel doom to the world.

The movie then paused thanks to Lucario. "Why would this single, enormous tree destroy the world?" he asked. "Is the whole Pokémon world connected to the tree because it can't just live by its own? I don't remember there being such an important tree."

Chris shrugged. "Well, you see… This movie we're watching is based on your world," he explained. "Therefore, you really didn't come from… the anime, I guess. You came from the game itself. In other words, the anime and the game are separate from each other. Think of it as two different stories based on the same topic."

"Oh, I see. That makes much more sense."

The duo came to the last scenes of the movie where the group found the core room of the tree. Inside, Lucario found Sir Aaron trapped inside a crystal formation. Confused by this, the Lucario then noticed that Ash found a Time Flower with a recording. It played a past memory of Sir Aaron using his own aura to deliver power for Mew to keep the tree from being destroyed. Mew then dove into the core to restore the land with its newly energized power. However, the transfer of aura energy put a heavy toll on Sir Aaron, as he was then encased in crystals till the present day.

Lucario leaned forward, curious as to what was going to happen. He started to drink more soda.

The Lucario knew what they needed to do: transfer energy into Mew so it could revitalize the tree. However, he tried to give his aura to Mew and found out too late that he wasn't strong enough to do so. Ash then recalled that he had the same aura patterns like Sir Aaron

and, putting on the late guardian's gloves, he learned that the gloves gave him the ability to channel his aura into Mew.

Lucario felt that his stomach was getting abnormally bloated, but he didn't care much. He was enthralled by the scene, which seemed pretty legit. "Transferring aura to another one's body is a true fact, but that puts a heavy toll on the user's body that it might really do kill them," Lucario explained. "I think I can do something like that without suffering from exhaustion or death as long as I don't go the extra mile."

"Wow, that's amazing," Chris commented.

"Except, I'm not the healer type, and I value my life," Lucario explained. He wasn't sure if the situation would happen in such a pacific world, so he went ahead and told Chris, "So… please, Chris, don't get within an inch of your life… I don't want to take some hard decisions like they do in the movie."

Chris shuddered. "I assure you that I won't…" he muttered.

That was it, the most important scene of the movie. Lucario leaned forward as he saw both Ash and the Lucario channeling their aura into Mew. Time passed and the Legendary Pokémon started to feel energized, at the cost of their energy as it began to strain their bodies. They both felt weak, and they felt that their lives were about to be snuffed out.

An unsettling grumbling came from Lucario's stomach. Although the Aura Pokémon ignored it, Chris started to look around, finding the sound a bit too horrendous.

Just then, the Lucario shoved Ash from the spot to save him from sacrificing himself.

Lucario's eyes widened.

The Lucario looked serious.

Lucario was starting to feel weird…

The abnormal amount of aura was transferred to Mew's body as the Lucario said, " ***THE AURA IS WITH M-*** "

" ***BUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUURP!*** "

A fearsome burp was unleashed right next to Chris. The teen, dismayed, felt the nearby furniture shake a bit as well as the cotton under the couch. Shocked to see a gush of air brush his hair, Chris's eyes widened as the burp kept on going. He froze in the spot, his frozen look fixed on the movie as it went on to the scene where the tree was restored.

Lucario closed his mouth after letting out the accumulated gas in his stomach. He was completely speechless about what he just did. He felt horribly humiliated, trying to find out what had caused him to burp so loudly and noisily. His free hand lifelessly paused the movie so that he could reflect on the event he caused. Without moving his face, his eyes looked down at the shocked teen before he said, "… Excuse me…"

"…" Chris blinked and stared up at Lucario. "…"

"…"

"… P-pfft…" Chris mumbled a small chuckled through his lips before he broke out laughing, grabbing his sides and leaning back on the couch. Looking angry, Lucario scoffed a bit, but then he chuckled nervously before he started laughing for a bit. "Oh god, that was *rich* !" Chris managed to say between laughs.

"I-I'm sorry about that," Lucario said, a twitching smile on his lips. "I don't know why I did that…"

Chris got a hold of himself and smiled at Lucario. "That's probably because you drank too much soda," he said. "What is this, your fifth glass?"

"O-oh… I see now…" Lucario looked down at the culprit of his burp: a half-drunk glass of soda.

"R-really? You didn't notice you were going to burp?"

"I was a little bit too distracted with the movie to care…"

"P-pfft…" Chris chuckled. "T-thank you! I had such a good laugh out of you."

Lucario sighed, although he looked pleased. "I'm never going to do that again… But I like drinking soda too much…" As he faced the dilemma of not drinking the beverage, Chris decided to resume the movie.

The tree was restored, but now the Lucario's time was running out. Just as the Lucario stumbled down, his hand bumped into a Time Flower that was hidden next to Sir Aaron's crystallized body. It played a last memory where it revealed that Sir Aaron told to himself that he wanted to save his servant, his actual friend, from the impending danger of the tree. He did realize that the Lucario was his friend, and the Lucario starting shedding tears just looking at his actual friend breathing out his last breath.

Despite the fact Lucario had interrupted the movie with his fearsome burp, he was moved by the scene that his eyes shed a small tear as he watched the Lucario's body glowing, his time coming to an end. As he thanked Ash for showing him how a bond between a human and a Pokémon was so important, the Aura Pokémon, along with his crystallized master, vanished from existence…

As Ash stepped outside the tree to reflect upon the values that he had taught the Lucario, Lucario heard a small sniff coming from Chris. The teen had shed more than a few tears just watching the last scenes, and then the ending credits came up, with a shot of the Lucario and Sir Aaron living somewhere in the afterlife. Sir Aaron, surprisingly, took out a chocolate bar, which made his Lucario look content at him.

And thus, the movie ended right there.

Sighing loudly, Lucario smiled down at Chris. "That was a very good movie," he said, wiping a tear away before Chris could notice it. "Thank you."

Chris sniffed a bit and forced a smile. "I'm so glad that you liked it," he said. "I think I saw you shed a tear…"

Lucario gasped, but then he smiled a bit. "His sacrifice moved me a bit…" he muttered, admitting his reason. "… It kind of baffles me that the movie ended with his sacrifice for the sake of the world, but… it was still sad to me." He himself looked a bit sad. "I know that was a happy ending… but I was wishing that the Lucario would join Ash in his journey, not die and be reunited with Sir Aaron."

"Perhaps, just maybe, Ash will catch a Riolu in the future," Chris said, looking hopeful. "Once they start airing the Sinnoh region, I'll pray that they let him get one…." He blushed a bit. "Having you here has made me like the Riolu line a lot, you know…"

The Aura Pokémon looked shocked. Looking away, he hid a small smile. "D-did I?" he asked.

"Of course!" Chris said, nodding a few times. "I would so totally keep watching the anime if they let him catch a Riolu. I hope for dear sake that they don't tease the fans by having a close encounter with one. That's just beyond disgraceful…"

"…" Lucario looked content at Chris for a brief second, and the teen thought that the bond between them had grown stronger. Lucario opened his eyes. "Thank you so much for showing me the movie."

Chris then yawned and stood back up, turning the TV off. "Well… I'm getting tired, and it's going to be ten already," he pointed out. "Why don't we turn in for the night? Tomorrow's another day."

Nodding and standing up to his full height, Lucario followed Chris back to his room, which slowly started to feel like it was their room.

As Lucario prepared himself to sleep, he wondered if there was going to be a happy ending for him and Chris down the road, in case that there was a way for him to return to his world. Then, recalling how the movie had ended with a semi-happy ending for both parties, he looked gloom… There was something awfully wrong just thinking about the pain it would give Chris if Lucario were to leave him behind forever, and Lucario's Riolu didn't want for that to happen, not even if he was dragged back to Sinnoh against his will. The Riolu would loudly complain and cry out for Chris to pull him back to his side.

There was no way the little Emanation Pokémon would resist the tormenting departure. He would be torn apart, and he feared that he would lose the wonderful memories he had made with the teen.

Lucario then noticed that he was still awake late into the night, and Chris was sleeping peacefully. The thought was still burned into his mind, and he looked sad just thinking about it. Though he also felt guilty that he was giving his back to the trainer he vaguely remembered… He stared long at Chris's back as the Aura Pokémon drifted to sleep…

The Riolu cried out, wanting their story to have a true happy ending where Lucario and Chris would stay together… forever…

To this day, I want to own a copy of the movie, yet the price for it is too damn high for some reason unlike the other movies… Maybe it's just that good?

For those of you who like the story, my artwork at deviantart showcase previews of future episodes. With this in mind, the next chapter is getting a preview in the form of its cover page.

I encourage readers to review.

A Pokemon Cook

Before anyone asks… no. There won't be Mega stuff for the entire run of this story. Live with the originals, you.

I encourage all readers to read, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 11: A Pokémon Cook

The sound of fireworks going off in the night sky startled Lucario from his reading. The Aura Pokémon blinked and lowered his book to see some bright lights coming from outside the second floor. Never one to be looking at that kind of event, Lucario could only blink blankly.

"They're starting to shoot fireworks at this hour," Chris told him as he appeared from the nearby stairs, holding two glasses with orange juice. "This is a very busy city so they won't stop shooting fireworks everywhere for at least two hours. Any longer than that and the police will get worried. But that happens when you live in a city full of proud Americans and… drunk people, I guess."

Lucario was told about how important it was today. Several days have passed, and July 4th arrived. It was a date to commemorate the independence of the humans that lived on the same soil Chris walked. The Aura Pokémon wasn't very interested on human history, but if Chris wanted him to see the fireworks, it would be a good distraction. When he saw the streaming lights falling down serenely from the sky, it did create a wide array of light patterns that faded away after imploding.

They were on the second floor, sitting down on a large couch that faced the terrace before them. They could have gone outside to step out, but Chris was paranoid someone outside would spot Lucario, though the place was too dark to see an imposing monster. From

where they were sitting, they were perfectly shaded from eyes in the outside.

As Chris sat down next to Lucario and set down the glasses, he looked at the tall Pokémon. "It's probably going to be hard to remember for you, but… did you ever watch fireworks when you were in your world?" he asked worried, knowing that he never saw in-game fireworks taking place in Sinnoh.

"I'm afraid not," Lucario said, looking down at Chris. "The word sounds a little foreign to me…"

"Foreign?" Chris questioned. "You… you don't know a lot of words?"

"…" Lucario looked away in shame, as the different-colored lights illuminated the somewhat dark floor. "… No, I don't know too many words myself other than words to talk to someone and words related to fighting… and what I can do."

"That's very odd…" Chris muttered. "I thought you were a little more knowledgeable in that than what I've been teaching you."

"All this time, I've been following… um… what is the expression? Following the flow?" Lucario wondered. "Yes, I've been following the flow of the conversations we've had so I wouldn't look so clueless to you… I realize I'm not the social type as the rest of the world here is." He looked back at Chris. "I do lack so many important practices."

The teen looked away. "With an answer like that, it makes me wonder how the Pokémon in your world behave around others… I suppose they're just really wild animals waiting to be taught how to… fight," he said. "… Are Pokémon really that stereotypical? Do they just think about fighting?"

Lucario didn't know the answer to that question. There was a fatal memory problem he never brought up to Chris before, and that was how he didn't remember much about his "past life" when he was trapped inside the game. He believed he was a Pokémon owned by

another trainer who wasn't Chris himself, and casually leaving that trainer out from him was not recommended. The Riolu inside his mind, though, clearly wanted to start anew rather than dwelling on memories that never happened. "I suppose so… b-but we do like our trainers," Lucario said, so unsure about the statement he made. "Only the Pokémon that are raised with care are the ones who don't fight all the time."

Chris could tell there was some hesitation there, yet the Pokémon's appearance was a little too intimidating to keep asking such hard questions. "… Do you?" Chris asked; his last question.

"… Me?" Lucario said once Chris stared up at him. "I… I've done some stuff with my trainer other than fighting."

Or perhaps he shouldn't stop asking questions there. Though it didn't look like it, Lucario felt he was being interrogated on a chair. "What kind of stuff?" Chris asked, smiling a bit in curiosity. "Ooh, tell me what stuff you've done with your trainer! Maybe I can do something similar with you to make you feel more at home here."

While the Riolu inside his mind glared rather fiercely for a cutesy creature, Lucario sweated bullets in a figurative sense.

It also made him wonder how in Arceus' name his subconscious managed to become a separate identity fully aware of his true feelings. It shouldn't even happen like that.

"We… we…" He had to make something up. Lying was such a cowardly act he disliked greatly, and so far he has been saying a fair amount of lies about how he felt about being in the real world. Another set of lies pilling up on top of those would crush him eventually, no matter if he was secretly a muscled Pokémon with a scrawny look. "We… played… played…" He closed his eyes and let his subconscious suggest anything just to get the question over with. It was a pretty bad idea for Lucario, as the Riolu barked happily a sweet-looking lie to embarrass himself. "… Hide-n-Seek." It was unavoidable to blush.

"… S-snrk," Chris suppressed a small snort. "H-hide-n-Seek? You?"

Inside his mind, Lucario growled furiously. "(Why would I ask for advice from you?!)" he told his troublemaking Riolu conscience, who didn't shiver in fear but laughed at his face. The Riolu laughing like that was a dead giveaway that Lucario wanted to chuckle at his own lie, but pride took over his outside face. "W-while I was a Riolu, I mean… (Oh Arceus, that's much better…)"

"O-oh, right," Chris said, his small snorts subsiding. "I just can't imagine such a large Lucario like you hiding behind a tree so simply… Did you have a lot of fun doing that when you were a little boy?"

He had to continue with the lie a little more, and he also needed to look convincing by forcing a smile that seemed to twitch. Chris noticed the twitching but dismissed it as just an embarrassing reaction. "A lot," Lucario said. "When I was smaller, my trainer would sneak up on me and pick me up by my arms. Then… we would roll around on the grass, laughing and rubbing our cheeks together." Albeit he was feeling way too embarrassed for saying such descriptions, he pressed on.

The Riolu felt silent, suddenly looking sad. He yearned to do that with Chris…

"That's… cute to imagine," Chris said, and Lucario never knew the teen wanted to do that with a Riolu, deep down in his own mind. "But then you evolved…"

"Yes," Lucario said, trying to look sad about the lie, but what he truly felt sad about was to never experience such memories as a young Riolu. "I grew so big and heavy that my trainer stopped playing with me, because I had grown mature and serious. Evolution is a way for Pokémon to reach adulthood faster, it seems…" There was something in him that told him his reasoning wasn't a lie at all. "And it was very brief." It truly was never there. "I had only been caught by her for three days only, and at the end of those three days, I was

already a Lucario…" His memory was a mess of blank memories that never happened much. He couldn't even remember when he was a Riolu.

"… Wait, are you trying to say you had a very short childhood?" Chris asked. "(That makes me wonder how the in-game Riley took some time to hand over that Riolu to my in-game avatar…)"

"I… guess," Lucario said. And he was honest when he said, "I have no memories of my parents at all while I grew up before I got caught and evolved. I was born from an egg with my trainer holding me."

"No memories of your parents?"

"(…?)"

Lucario quickly picked up a strange, negative feeling from Chris's aura. It was a feeling of sorrow that pierced through his soul… In fact, it was so bad it was nagging Lucario's senses.

Then the sorrowful emotion went away very quickly before Lucario could have a chance to look more closely into it, not that he wanted to do it. "That's horrible…" Chris muttered. "You don't remember your parents?"

"That is the disadvantage a Pokémon has when they're taken away while they're in their eggs," Lucario explained. "But because we are born as naïve children, anybody close to us at the time of our birth is given the role of parents until we grow up and realize we never saw our real parents. I thought my trainer as my parent… and in less than a month or so I never cared about looking for my real parents." He sighed, feeling sad for not even considering looking for his parents. His false memories were just making things worse. "A childhood that lasted three days without ever knowing who your parents were… How morbid, isn't it?"

Chris mumbled. "Yes…" he muttered. "The whole adulthood method you Pokémon have is so messed up in that regard."

Lucario knew he was telling some true facts in his explanation. Albeit the memories of his trainer and other times were a lie, the other memories were true. Anything before those three days were a mystery and only Chris knew it most certainly had to do with Riley giving the Riolu egg to his in-game avatar. Chris couldn't bring himself to say that as it would be too confusing.

Mysteriously enough, Lucario felt an odd sense of nostalgia when he said those lies. Even the Riolu blinked in realization and cocked his head to side as if those lies were actually…

"It's like you skipped your childhood altogether," Chris added. "I did have a childhood that I never skipped, but you… Don't you want to have an opportunity to have a normal childhood?"

"It's too late," Lucario said. "I don't think like I used to. I only cared about fighting until… until I ended up here with no means to fight anybody, and I doubt the humans of your world can even stand a chance against someone like me."

"I hardly think any humans of *your* world can stand up against an evolved Pokémon," Chris retorted, "… and much less a juggernaut like you."

Lucario smiled a bit at the indirect compliment. He liked the "j" word. "In any case, I don't wish to go through childhood again, because I feel superior as a Lucario and it's technically impossible for a Pokémon to…'de-evolve.'"

The teen looked doubtful. "But if you could… would you?"

"De-evolve?"

"No. Have a chance to live a longer childhood if it was possible."

"Uh…" Lucario rubbed his chin, thinking hard about the possibility. The Riolu was beaming with glee at the idea and, much to his real self's chagrin, it occasionally said he wanted Chris in there. "… I…

suppose. It's hard to go back to being a puny Riolu when you're this big and strong." Taking offense to that, the Riolu stuck out his tongue.

The house owner shrugged. "Are you drunk with your power or something?" he asked rhetorically before Lucario could answer. "Honestly now! You're some sort of Battle Maniac."

The Riolu nodded several times while Lucario stared blankly. "No, I'm not a Battle Maniac," he said. "I can do other stuff besides the stuff you've taught me. (He surely forgot I can sense auras.)"

"Okay then," Chris said, putting up a dull look. "Mention something that doesn't have to do with battle… or…" he got in deep thought, "… your aura senses."

"…" Lucario was cornered. "…" He looked to the sides, his red eyes not taking their focus on Chris's dull-looking eyes. As he tried hard to say something else, he eventually came to a dead end. "… It-it's not fair! You took down all my answers!" he complained.

The Aura Pokémon saw the teen smiling in victory. "See now? This is why you should expand your horizons beyond just fighting and meditating," he said. "Tomorrow, I'm introducing you to a new lesson now that you've learned to read faster at a normal reading speed. Congrats!"

Lucario looked down at the book on his lap. Days of hard training paid off nicely now that he was able to read words clearly without stopping. With the boring books of history done for (and his somewhat childish thoughts that he defeated the laughing words), he was now allowed to take on written stories that Chris stored in his room. The Aura Pokémon was interest to read "The Bean Trees," which was the book he was reading right now.

"Thank you," Lucario said. "Reading does have its benefits now that I understand the words as long as they don't sound too foreign."

"I knew you would get the hang of it soon," Chris said. "But I wonder if you can learn the next big thing tomorrow…" The teen looked outside to see the fireworks going off. He saw a watermelon pattern. "Oh! They're shooting fireworks with patterns now! Let's see them for a while longer."

Lucario blinked and fell silent as he watched the fireworks with Chris. He ended up enjoying seeing the different colors and patterns in the sky, and he greatly enjoyed the teen's company more than before. A bond was forming up between them, and the Riolu flailed his arms in happiness at the fact. The day he would admit his true opinions about the teenager were coming closer.

It was too soon. He needed more time to see if he could go back to his old world, and the thought of leaving Chris behind stung him so badly… Was making a strong attachment to a person other than his forgotten trainer a good idea? He pondered this as the fireworks went off all night long…

The next day…

"I'm teaching you how to cook."

It occurred to Lucario that this human was most likely insane without any doubt. No way would that beaming look not hide any dark motives. A motive then reared its head after those words were spoken clearly. Everything was too good to be true before that moment. He needed to make a run for it discretely in a smart way!

"… You can't be serious," Lucario responded as he stared down at a frying pan on top of an oven.

"Oh, I'm serious now," Chris said. "I can't have you seek out fruits outside once I go back to school."

So far, Lucario had no business to stay in the home's kitchen for longer than twenty seconds. It was a sacred place where steaks would come out and get delivered to his plate just to be mercilessly

torn apart by his crazy strong fangs. To him, it was taboo to go in there to do anything else that wasn't putting dirty plates in the dishwasher. Getting close to a storage or machine of sorts would be bad news, and he felt pathetic to occasionally think about raiding the refrigerator at night to find meat without needing Chris's help. He was a highly carnivorous person.

The kitchen was a white, clean place in the house. It didn't look as fancy as the living room, or that was what Lucario thought, as he wasn't that good at evaluating interior decorating. He could only describe the kitchen as clean, with the floor under his feet barely reflecting his body as a large blue blur. On the south side, the way to the dining table next to the living room was located. On the west side, a large white refrigerator stood proudly leaning to the wall. On the east side, the dishwasher and the sink were located in front of a window looking outside the backyard's east portion. However, the north side seemed to be the busiest spot, as there were a multitude of drawers, small doors, and other small compartments on the floor and hanging on the walls on the sides of a large black oven. The central point of the kitchen meanwhile had a large kitchen table, possibly for multitasking.

"Go to school?" Lucario questioned. "You?"

Chris looked offended. "Why do you sound surprised? You've seen the diplomas I have hanging on my room's walls," he said. "What I don't have in brawn, I make it up with my brain a lot."

"Oh, sorry… I'm used to think Pokémon Trainers solely travel everywhere without ever attending school," Lucario said. "That's what little I can remember from my world."

"I'm not suicidal enough to go traveling the world inhabited by creatures that can potentially skin me alive rather than staying put in a single place…"

"I could travel with you for your protection," Lucario babbled for too much, gasping mentally at the atrocity he said and wishing he wasn't

too blunt. The Riolu flailed his arms with glee.

Luckily, Chris didn't look too much into the simple statement. "There is no real point doing that in my world. I do plan to study to get into my desired job field… whatever that is. I'm still undecided about choosing my profession," he pointed out. "That's a topic for another day. Today, I'm teaching you how to cook some simple meals."

The last words alone made Lucario imagine the whole house burning down to the ground because of his reckless actions. He had to avoid this lesson at all costs to never come to that mentally scarring event. "I… Uh… Is this necessary?" Lucario asked, looking quite perplexed and restless. "Aren't you taking these lessons a little too far?"

There was a hollow but unsettling silence when the teen stared long at Lucario's face. "I can see hesitation when I look at your face," Chris said duly. This human is incredibly frightening, Lucario thought. He did not need sixth senses to perceive emotions. For a brief moment, he thought his aura abilities were there just to make up for his lack of social skills, meaning he was flawed. "Unfortunately, I did think far ahead in my life once you started settling in, and so I foresaw what would happen if I were to leave you here alone while I'm busy at High School. I'm not going to be here during the mornings, and the bus leaves pretty early, not giving me enough time to give you anything to eat."

This was the perfect moment to rebut the statements.

"I can go without eating each morning," Lucario said, forcing a stoic look. "Really, I don't need to be fed three times a day. I can do just fine with just two meals."

"You think so?" Chris said with a quizzical look as he looked at Lucario's stomach. "If you were a normal Lucario with the official height, I'd see how you wouldn't need to eat too much with such a skinny body…" Chris never knew that made Lucario slightly angry, as he was somewhat sensitive about his body shape. It was Lucario's secret wish to become a buff Pokémon; perhaps the first

buff Lucario in history. Added with the fact the teen mentioned he had incredible strength, the Aura Pokémon did think he needed to look the part better with large biceps. "But look at you! You're a giant when we stand next to each other. Even taller than my dad, too. That stomach you have there is just as big as mine for sure so… you need to make it up by eating a little more food occasionally."

That was a pretty strong defense to justify the lesson, but Lucario needed to break down that wall without using physical strength. "I can try using my aura to detect people outside an-"

"Out of the question," Chris interrupted.

"Let me finish," Lucario said. "I told you I can sense auras. I can become familiar with the terrain and find fruit in a tree to eat without arising suspicion."

"… Out of the question," Chris repeated without considering. Lucario groaned mentally. "It's extremely risky. I can't have you running outside and let a single adult spot you. It would cause such a huge uproar if they saw you coming into my house. I'd have to deal with so many questions and then… No!" He strongly disagreed. "Can't you imagine how bad things would get?"

"I-I guess…" Lucario stuttered, and then there was a feeling of sadness emanating from Chris's aura. The Aura Pokémon couldn't bring himself to keep pushing his way out of the lesson if it meant the teen would get sad… If the lesson took place in the beginning, he would have pressed on regardless. Now, it was impossible to be selfish without making a person sad. "My stay here would get impossible to bear in that situation…"

"Exactly," Chris said. The emotion of sadness was going away, relieving Lucario. "I can probably have you eat leftovers every day, but just in case I ever forget to make you some food, you'll have to do it yourself."

Lucario stared at the frying pan with a hard look. He was quick to envision a hellfire exploding in the house by his own hands. From inside that inferno, he saw himself burning to the ground before the house collapsed on him, bellowing to the sky why he couldn't cook a piece of steak.

His assumed trainer saw the hard stare, which made him think about doing something else. "… But thinking again, letting you move on to the frying pan is just jumping the gun too soon. I don't want the house to be on fire because of you." While Lucario was impressed that Chris managed to get close to his nightmare, the teen put the frying pan away. The imaginary house suddenly was safe from fire. "We'll have to start with something much more basic, easier and less threatening… A sandwich!"

"What?" Lucario said, looking back at Chris. "A sandwich?"

"Yes. Come to think of it, I haven't even made you one from the beginning," Chris noted. "Do you want to learn how? It's very simple."

Lucario thought about the impossibility that was other trained Pokémon looking at him making food with human tools. They would laugh at his back and indirectly ask for a beating of their lives (unless they were Ghost-types, which Lucario couldn't even punch). There were no Pokémon around, but just a harmless human who wanted him to learn so much. And perhaps, learning how to make food while he was alone in the house would prove to be beneficial. Getting back on topic, he was embarrassed to say he didn't know what a sandwich was.

"It's got ham in it," Chris suddenly said, thinking Lucario was feeling hesitant about the easy task.

"I'm in," Lucario almost immediately replied, growling loudly at the Riolu in his mind who just giggled under his little blue hands at his little act of mischief. He really needed to put his cravings for meat under control, or else his species would look down on him…

Several minutes later, on top of the kitchen table, there were ingredients placed in front of the imposing Lucario, and he felt that those ingredients were friends with the letters that used to laugh at his face, seeing as he imagined the abhorrent piece of lettuce - a sickening vegetarian's food - pointing fingers at him… Why the hell was he imagining such things? Was his unconscious trying to make him look like a very childish person? He had to admit he was so stressed about his situation, so that was probably it. He needed support or else he would lose it… if he wasn't losing it already. Focus, he told himself.

"The most basic of all dishes there is," Chris said. "Even if you have large hands, it shouldn't be too difficult to even add mayonnaise to the bread."

Lucario took a moment to look at his hands. Compared to Chris's delicate, smaller hands and fingers, one finger from Lucario's hands would be enough to smother an entire hand. Though if he can hold forks perfectly, a butter knife wouldn't be that harder to hold. "Really, after comparing our hands' sizes, I feel like I am really too big," Lucario said.

"That's… true," Chris admitted. "I thought you'd measure under my chest area, but *I'm the one* who measures right below your chest… spike," he added when his eyes stopped at the somewhat large spike protruding from the aura wielder's chest. "Give me a few years and someday I'll get my head stabbed if I turn around the corner."

"Nonsense, Chris. I can prevent head-on collisions thanks to my aura senses warning me beforehand," Lucario explained. "I assure you my spikes won't ever hurt you in any gruesome way."

"Oh… That sounded very reassuring coming from you," Chris noted. "You are incredible," he muttered in a low tone that Lucario managed to hear clearly anyway. The Riolu beamed with glee at the small praise, though his older appearance had a blank look petrified on his face. "So then, let's start off with your first dish created by your own hands."

As some time passed by, Lucario wondered why he was doing this again. Wasn't his trainer's job to feed him and not make his own food? His trainer wasn't there with him, and it felt wrong to him for Chris to give him food when he wasn't that person. But still, he could go out and find food in trees, yet that idea was shot down for their own safety. Times really had changed so drastically in a brief moment, and he didn't know if he could adapt so quickly to his new environments. He pondered this as his blank mind mindlessly followed all of the steps Chris outlined for him to do to make his food at home.

Just as he was at the point where his body was acting on its own without his will to respond, a loud screeching sound came from his hands that snapped him out from his trance. Startled, he looked down at the cut tomato trapped in his left hand while the other hand was holding some kind of metal with a handle. The cold metal hadn't cut the tomato a second time. It was actually over his left hand… and it was shredded to pieces.

"M-my goodness…" Chris breathed out, Lucario becoming aware of what happened. "T-the knife you used… You were about to cut your hand, but… ! The knife broke!"

Blinking, Lucario finally became fully aware of the situation, raising the strange metal to his eyes. The once firm-looking knife was mercilessly destroyed once it dared cut his hand's skin instead of leaving a deep bleeding wound. In fact, he had done three motions with it, and none of them managed to hurt him at all. "… Oh," was all Lucario said.

"…'Oh'? That's all?" Chris said, looking bewildered as he stared at Lucario. "My god, you could've hurt yourself so badly! I saw your hand moving the knife three times over the same spot, and that one knife is one of the sharpest ones I have…" Lucario stared down at the torn metal pieces sprinkled around the tomato over the cutting board. "I know you're a Steel-type Pokémon as well, but your hands don't really feel that hard to the touch."

"Huh…" Lucario felt like he wasn't in touch with the real world more than his mental thoughts. "Maybe I really am strong in all ways," he said, still looking stoic.

"No kidding… First super strength, now nigh invulnerability?" Chris said. "We only need to see how fast you are and then I'll classify you as an otherworldly being… Don't tell me you can fly as well. You'll be a demi god if you do."

Lucario didn't dislike the idea to having the power of flight. "No, I'm sure I can't fly," he said. "But as for speed…" The temptation to run around the house right there for some workout was definitely tempting. The Riolu looked pumped up as well.

"N-no, please no, not today," Chris blurted out quickly. "Today's a day to teach you how to cook, not to show off your moves for me." Even the Riolu had to look saddened for not showing off his moves. "Just… let me clean the table from those knife bits. I don't want steel to be mixed with your sandwich, unless Steel types can eat steel and metal."

"Of course they don't," Lucario dismissed, but he wasn't all sure about it. "… Well, at least not my species."

After clearing the cutting table from the metal pieces, Lucario put his head back to reality (as much as he could) and retried cutting the tomato, this time without decimating a second knife. Thankfully, the knife was spared, and a freshly cut tomato piece was ready. "Good," Chris said. "From here, things shouldn't make your body destroy anything else other than the sandwich."

Lucario stiffed a small glare. "I can be very delicate," he said.

"Tell that to the knife you killed delicately," Chris retorted. The Riolu groaned loudly and hunched over, but Lucario suppressed his deep growls as to not scare the teen.

Ten minutes later, Lucario had managed to create food of his own without having to pluck berries out from trees or kill large Tauros. Just as he wondered if Tauros were edible, he looked down on the harmless-looking sandwich. It actually looked appetizing, mostly because there was a square piece of ham sticking out from all edges, along with the tomato and lettuce pieces on top of the squared cheese hidden between the meat and lettuce. Because of size differences, the sandwich looked small compared to the towering monster in front of it. The point became clearer when Lucario picked it up with a hand. His hand could cover it completely and even hide it in a clenched fist.

"… Wow. I didn't think the sandwich would look that small on your hand," Chris muttered. "It almost looks like a snack instead of breakfast…"

The Aura Pokémon took a closer look at the sandwich. His nose quickly picked up the pork smell from the ham, which triggered his starving instincts to take a big bite (nearly a third) of the sandwich… The taste was pretty good. The ham mixed up with the cheese, and the lettuce and tomato were nice extras that blended well with the bread. This was better than eating the dreadful cereals he was forced to eat as punishment, and he could really see himself eating this many times in each day. "This is good," he said, but the Riolu said, "This is SOOOOOOOO good! I want more!"

"I know this sounds pretty weird, but… congrats for making your own food," Chris said, smiling a bit. "It wasn't as hard as you thought, did it?"

"It wasn't," Lucario said, and then he gave up to his hunger and started eating the sandwich until it was gone forever inside his body. He did lament how the experience was pretty brief, but he did swallow more than savoring the taste. Chris knew he had eaten it too fast.

"That went pretty fast…" Chris muttered. "I guess it'd be better if you ate two sandwiches instead."

Either Lucario had to agree that he needed more food or that he could manage with one serving. "… I want another one," Lucario said, giving up to his inner Riolu. "I'm still hungry."

The teen chuckled. "(Is he trying to look tough? He doesn't want to look so submissive.) Do you want me to make you one?" he offered. "You could try making another one without listening to me."

"I'll take your offer," Lucario said nodding. "Next time, though, I'll do it myself."

"Then I suppose you can make your food from now on," he said. Lucario stared down at him. "If you ever feel very hungry and you want to eat, go ahead. The kitchen will be open to you 24/7. Don't wait for me to make you food if you really want to eat… Well, eat breakfast. You still don't know how to make steaks."

The word "steak" was so imprinted in Lucario's mind that his mouth watered very fast just hearing it. Oh, if only he could do it himself without simply thinking about hunting animals. "I wanna learn how to make steaks!" the Riolu beamed with glee.

Then the gruesome image of the house burning down scared him away from being near a frying pan.

"Uh… It'll take a long while for me to know how to make steaks," Lucario admitted, feeling disappointed. "This involves fire from a machine. I wouldn't bear to know I caused an accident by burning down your house."

Chris shuddered. "I-it's not like you'll screw up that badly," he said. "Someday, you'll be able to use a frying pan expertly! Just maybe, I guess… Maybe you'll be better than I am."

"Better than you?" Lucario said. "I can't really see it. You serve good food. None of it has been bad… except for eating cereal every morning." He growled in disgust. "I am not drinking milk for a few more days."

"(Maybe I was too rough with that punishment? I still have a head on top of my shoulders…)" Chris thought, feeling alarmed. "Who knows? Besides having super skills, you could have a future as a chef."

"I still don't see it," he said defiantly.

"… Fine, then. You'll be an average cook, or chef. I don't know the difference between both," Chris said. "Anyway, I'll make you a sandwich myself. I'm giving you a glass with orange juice for a more complete meal." Juice was a very refreshing drink to Lucario; even better than drinking the gas-filled soda drinks he liked to drink on occasion. He wouldn't drink more than one soda just to keep his dignity, but fighting his meat cravings was another obstacle that was even harder to overcome.

When Lucario had left the kitchen, Chris got into thinking about the knife that broke. "(Just what is he?)" he thought. "(He can lift a bed and cut down tree trunks without struggling or looking exhausted, he can't feel pain when cutting himself accidentally… Are Pokémon really that strong?)" he wondered as he was now out of touch with the real world, his hands working by themselves on the next sandwich. "(Or is he a big exception? He has to be… I mean, this Lucario is abnormally huge and powerful, maybe even too powerful for his own good. I don't want to see him ever going on a rampage so things are nice as they are. Still… what *is* he? Why did this even happen in the first place?)" The answers to his troubling questions would probably never resurface under the current circumstances.

The rest of the day went by with Lucario making another memory to look back to. He clarified this nice event by nighttime when Chris was already sleeping, a small smile stuck on him as he breathed air. The Aura Pokémon looked down on the human, flashing a small smile of his own before looking out to the window. He expected fireworks to implode in the sky, though seeing the bright moon was more than enough.

He reflected on the skills he had learned thus far. Lucario knew how to read, how to use utensils, how to play video games, how to watch movies and even comment on them, how to make some food for himself, how to maintain the flowers outside, how to cut and store wood for Winter, how to take a shower… He knew so many Pokémon didn't know how to do all this. He was truly special, even more so when Chris told him he was incredibly strong.

His thoughts stopped at the word "strong."

Lucario blinked and looked back at Chris, and then he looked down at his body. Thinking back, he hadn't mastered how to use Aura Sphere. All this time, he hadn't done an appropriate training session to temper his body. Meditating had become very dull and he needed to do some workout badly. True, being told he was very strong felt reassuring, but Lucario was an overachiever when it came down to power. If he truly was the strongest, the only common goal was to become even stronger. No Pokémon would dare look at him funny if he managed to learn Aura Sphere and reach higher ranks.

But how could he do all that in this world with no Pokémon? Training was all he could do, but how? He needed to train now! Perhaps the dream of growing muscles wasn't totally impossible, but that was pretty far off. What could he use at home for workout? He needed some equipment but Chris lacked gym equipment, even dumbbells. He could probably replace something with what he needed and pretend it was…

… Lucario looked at the bed. Didn't Chris say it was one of the heaviest things in the house? The Aura Pokémon knew how to be careful. And maybe with Chris's body as added weight would make this work. Now, he could wake up early in the morning and start from there…

A small smile formed on his lips as he nodded to himself and went to sleep in his usual sitting position. Tomorrow was the day he would start his training schedule.

TO BE CONTINUED…

I think this chapter was a little too brief, but I also think that it was enough to make some good impressions about Lucario himself, as in, what he wishes to do the most.

So, expect the next chapter to be the start of his training regimes. It can only go downhill from there… Uh, I mean, uphill.

Please do review!

A Day of Training

Were you thinking this story was dead to me? Heavens no.

I encourage all healthy people to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 12: A Day of Training

Chris was having a good sleep in the morning. For some reason, his bed felt far comfier than usual. He was in Summer Vacation so there was no worry to oversleep a little. It was his reward for having finished Junior High School, after all, but the fact that a Lucario was sort of tossed in there, that was very nice, just like his comfy bed.

He woke up very slowly. His vision was blurry enough to distort his sight in front of him. Maybe it was just him, but it felt like he was being pushed up and down along with the bed. He mumbled a few words and just closed his eyes, dismissing the odd blurry event as a dream. He was dreaming for sure. Chris's mind was probably playing some tricks on him, just like the day a huge Lucario was dropped in his room… except the Lucario was very real. The swaying of the bed was definitely a dream, though.

"… 420… 421… 422… 423…" The movement stopped. "… No, I can do this faster and smoother. That won't wake him up… 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430…" The movement became faster and smoother, in no way brusque and reckless. "Heh, this bed isn't as heavy as he said it was. It's the only thing I can use to build up some muscle…"

"… Wha…?" Chris opened his eyes and rubbed them to clear his vision. When he noticed that he was pushed up and down to the direction of the ceiling, his eyes widened. He looked to his right and saw the upper border of the widescreen TV before his gaze wandered above forcefully. It became clear to him what was

happening. "EARTHQUAKE!" he panicked and quickly sat up to jump down, only then his feet realized the floor was a little farther away from usual that he ended up falling down face-first. "O-oww…"

"… Chris?"

"… U-um…" The teen groaned in pain rolled to the side to rest on his back, confirming that there was no such earthquake in LA. As he stared up at the ceiling for a moment, he sat up and saw the reason why he thought there was an earthquake.

The Aura Pokémon was doing pushups right underneath the heavy bed, his thin but strong arms stretching out from the floor, his legs spread evenly and firm, and his back carrying the whole bed with impressive display of raw strength. Though Chris couldn't see clearly, there was no sweat on the serious Pokémon's face, which had been a real shame to Lucario.

"M-my bed!" Chris shouted. "M-my goodness, what are you doing?!"

Lucario blinked rather casually. "I was doing pushups," he simply said. "You said your bed was the heaviest object in the house, so I…"

"… started doing pushups underneath… while I was asleep?" Chris finished, looking morbidly surprised that he couldn't wake up somewhere in the hundredth rep.

"… Basically, yes," Lucario said… and continued doing pushups. "456, 457, 458, 459…"

"H-hey, stop!" Chris ordered. The Aura Pokémon stopped. "I-I haven't given you permission to do such a thing yet! I'm surprised I didn't roll over the bed till now…"

"I… Um… I'm sorry…" Lucario said, looking depressed. Sighing, he pushed up the bed with a free hand - of course not feeling stress or

compression - and crawled out to stand up and take a deep breath. "… Not heavy enough," he muttered.

If Chris could sweat-drop, he would do it around now. "Really now," he replied.

Lucario gasped. "I-I'm sorry for not asking for permission to do pushups under your bed," he apologized. "And… for that matter… uh… good morning?"

"That sure was a good morning to me… while falling down my bed," Chris complained, making Lucario look guilty. "… But anyway, good morning to you. I hope my added weight mass was enough for your little training… (Dear god, does he think I'm fat?)"

Lucario wasn't stupid. He could see the sarcasm and annoyance right through his words, but sarcasm wasn't part of the large scheme of emotions his aura could pick up. "I'm very sorry about it, really," Lucario reinforced. "I was starting to get desperate with not doing any sort of physical training. Meditating many times gets dull quickly, and my body needs me to get tempered."

Chris decided to humor the juggernaut. "If you can lift up my bed… and me with your back without breaking a sweat, doesn't that tell you that you're super strong already?" he asked.

The Pokémon put up a tough look. "I firmly believe there is no limit to my powers," he said. To add emphasis to his statement, he let his aura flow out of his body, engulfing every corner including the murderous spikes on his limbs.

"W-wow," Chris muttered, causing Lucario to blink.

"Is… something the matter?" Lucario asked, still glowing with his aura.

"Y-you look kind of cool glowing like that," Chris admitted. The light of the aura was illuminating the room a bit thanks to the curtains

blocking the sunlight. The teen could swear that there was an otherworldly feeling rubbing on him by standing close to the glowing creature. "A-ah!" He blushed and looked away. "S-sorry, what I mean is that… you're strong enough as you are! How could there be more improvements to your strength?"

"(His aura is exuding ecstasy and awe…)" Lucario thought to himself, as he read Chris's aura with great detail. "… Because I don't know how to use Aura Sphere. That is why," Lucario responded, making his glowing aura vanish. "Ever since I arrived here, I have tried to create a single orb of aura to use for combat, but I'm unable to do that… It's a great shame to a Lucario that can't use the move." His inner worries showed up in his saddened look as he looked down on his hands.

"… That look on your face tells a lot," Chris pointed out. "It really is bringing you down…"

The Aura Pokémon looked back at the teen. "All those praises you've told me before made me feel better," he said. "So… I wondered if I could learn Aura Sphere soon enough. I wish to see how powerful the move is when I use it. You told me I have impressive strength."

"And you're also very tall, if the data I've read is to be believed."

Lucario looked a bit shocked. "Data? You mean to say… you know how to teach me Aura Sphere?"

"Wait, what? No!" Chris shook his head. "T-that data I read is just Pokédex data about your species. It doesn't say anything about teaching Pokémon moves through actual training. From what I know, Pokémon just sort of automatically learn moves through leveling as they fight battles."

"Learn moves… automatically?" Lucario wondered, tilting his head. "There have been moments when Pokémon do learn moves automatically, but many do need to learn how first… That's what I

think." He cursed his dormant memories. He wasn't very sure about anything like that, but it felt right to say it anyway, just to remember the home he hardly saw. "It'll take me some time to learn the move eventually. But… there aren't any Pokémon in this world; not even within the area my aura reaches out to. Can I gain experience just working out? Aren't there strong humans around?"

Inside Chris's mind, he imagined the Lucario growling and killing Bidoof with a single Force Palm to the face. The Bidoof disintegrated, leaving blood marks of the scene of the crime. Now, he replaced Bidoof with humans. It was far worse and horrifying. "… I'm not taking you out to a dojo or whatever! That'd ruin the whole 'hide the big Lucario from humanity' thing!" Chris objected. "And I won't let you punch a human. You'll kill someone!"

Through sheer will, Lucario avoided glaring. "I can try to lessen the force of my blows," he said.

"You're still ignoring the part about hiding," Chris pointed out.

"Oh, right… Lessening my power wouldn't just feel right." Taking a risky move, Chris stood on the tip of his feet and knocked on Lucario's forehead. It did feel like knocking on a wall. The Pokémon didn't feel the knocking. "Uh, what?"

"You. Are. Not. Going. To. Fight. A. Person. Period," Chris said with emphasis on each word.

The mental Riolu pouted. "Then what do you have in mind to train me?" Lucario questioned. He was sadly glaring down at Chris, but he took it back when he sensed a wave of fear coming from the teen. "I-if you have anything… I'm not forcing you."

"W-well, I did say I'd get to train you… somehow…" Chris muttered. "I wonder what I can do with you. My house isn't exactly a luxurious military camp… Like I said before, you have incredible strength. I should draw some very hard routines."

Lucario looked around for a bit. "If I'm that strong, can I try lifting the house?" he asked. The look on his face said he wasn't kidding. He was dead serious about it, and Chris discouraged the idea strongly. As much as it sounded tempting to see him do it, Chris couldn't afford seeing the water tubes getting torn apart and the whole foundation falling down.

"… Dear god, you *are* desperate," the teen muttered. "I need to come up with something fast." He needed some sort of distraction. What if Lucario would try to do that? "Uh… Do you want to have breakfast first? There's a lot of bacon to look forward to." Lucario's weak stomach growled in anticipation, making Chris laugh for a bit.

After a relaxing breakfast and a soothing shower, it turned out Chris managed to come up with a routine. To challenge Lucario's limits, he gave him a near-impossible task.

"1000 pushups in the balcony," Chris said stoically. "It's summer. Let the heat of the sun make you sweat."

The Aura Pokémon actually looked pleased. "It shall be done," he said, and politely bowed before making his way to the second floor.

When Lucario was gone, Chris grimaced. "(Not a single objection to that? Really, that seemed a little weak to him… Oh well. As long as he's happy about it…)" He looked around the empty living room. "(And now I'm alone, and I dislike doing anything else outside. The temperature is a bit too high today… No, I have to do my best for him somehow. I need to come up with more exhausting-sounding routines. This should end once he learns Aura Sphere.)" He sighed, wondering if letting the juggernaut learn such a move would end up with stuff blowing up. Gulping, Chris hoped nothing like that would happen as he went to his room to grab a notepad and a pen.

An hour later, before noon set it, Chris heard the doors of the balcony closing. In a minute, Lucario was back to his room, and he seemed to be breathing a little fast. "Done," he said. "1000 pushups under the sun. That was good." He fought the thought about flexing

an arm to see if he had grown a little muscle mass. The Riolu inside of him flexed both and then collapsed on his back.

Lucario had arrived behind Chris's back, for the latter was sitting down on a chair in front of a desk with a notepad full of routines. The Aura Pokémon saw him checking a line before turning around to look up at him. "Oh, you did it?" he asked.

"Yes, I did," Lucario said, smiling a bit. "I did build up a sweat… mostly because of the sun, but it was good all the same."

"Nice! I'm so glad you're having fun with this."

"Why shouldn't I? I do love to work out my body after tempering my mind too many times before," Lucario said. "(Soon, I shall be able to start learning how to do an Aura Sphere if I keep this up…)"

"It's good you like it because…" the teen rose up from his seat and held his notepad, "I came up with a lot of impossible-sounding routines for you to do."

The person in front of Lucario surely wasn't his trainer, but he did sure look convincing enough to pass off as one. Grateful that he was told to do training other than simply learning how to read or make food, the Aura Pokémon was starting to think differently about the human. The Riolu in his mind ran wild with the idea, as he was wagging his little tail so vigorously and barking happily. "That's… that's great," Lucario said, his reading-eyes catching sight on some interesting sentences that caught his attention.

"It really wasn't that hard to get some ideas, after I saw you doing a thousand pushups…" Chris trailed off. "If anything, your strength makes things easier than they are without injuring yourself. No pain, no gain."

Foreign to the saying, Lucario could tell what that meant just fine. "Make me feel as much pain as possible that I'll wake up bruised up the next morning," he said, sounding like he was challenging Chris.

Chris was quick to envision himself lashing Lucario with a whip, only for Lucario to get angry, grab the whip, and blast Chris's face with a Force Palm. Was the Aura Pokémon masochist? "(S-stupid weather! Stop making me think of the worst case scenarios!) O-okay, you gave me the go, but I won't hurt you myself, and I sure wish my regime doesn't leave you handicapped."

"Bring it on," Lucario said, narrowing his eyes.

"(… Holy crud… I can totally sense the fire in his eyes,)" Chris shivered, to which Lucario quickly sensed a wave of fear and opened up his eyes. "(He does love to work up a sweat… I better make a note of that to get even closer to his side. That could save me a lot of rage fits in the future.) Alright, then. Your body better be ready for this." The Riolu pouted and tried to look tough.

Sit-ups were just as basic as pushups, but the fact Chris tossed in the word "rhythmical" was a little unexpected instead of the count. Lying down on his back on the floor of the living room, the dutiful Lucario started the routine, sitting up with a rate of 30 sit-ups per minute without dropping the rhythm of his body.

"The point of this training is to see how well you can raise and lower your upper body without suddenly rising up or falling down too fast," Chris explained, sitting down on the couch to the right side. "I want to have some… fun seeing how you can keep the rhythm. (Oh god, I sounded too creepy there…)"

"Hah, challenge my body in any way you see fit," Lucario dared, doing sit-ups with a steady rhythm and holding his angles without missing the beat. "In the end, I benefit from this."

"(We'll see if I don't benefit from this as well, you,)" Chris thought with a stoic look. "(Taming you with this should let me avoid so many close calls later on as you keep living under my roof… unless I'm making any future beat-downs all the worse on my end… Uh…)" He gulped. "(… I need to keep giving him more food. No way am I letting

him grow any muscles and kill me with a sneeze!) I'll look forward to see you learning Aura Sphere."

"When that happens, I'll show you everything I can do with my aura senses," Lucario said, unaware that he gave Chris a sincere smile that was very inviting. "I guarantee you will be amazed."

"A-ah… I-I see," Chris responded. "… I knew I would benefit from this too. You just proved it."

"Oh…" Lucario was just about to slow down in his sit-ups, but he caught on quickly. The Riolu cheerfully tossed his arms up and hopped around. "… I-I see you're trying to distract me with this conversation. Very smart, Chris, but it won't work on me." He focused his sight on the ceiling and the angle going down from there. The teen blinked in confusion at the statement.

"But I didn't… I wasn't…"

There was regret building up inside Lucario. The little comment was a little too much for him to take, just trying to push Chris apart and fear the thought about liking him better than his trainer. The Riolu growled angrily at his move, representing how his subconscious was completely against the idea of not making a strong, unbreakable bond with the human, even if he enjoyed everything about Chris. "… Um… at what sit-up I'm at now?" he asked.

"Huh? Uh, the 60th," Chris said.

"Oh, I see. Thanks," Lucario thanked with a small smile. Despite the confirmation not looking like one, Lucario felt good that his makeshift apology worked. The Riolu looked happy that his older self tried to amend things at least. "(I can't grow too fond of him! He is showing me a lot of wonderful stuff to make me feel at home, but there should be a limit to this! I can't just push away my trainer over him…)"

An hour later, the Aura Pokémon stood up and took a deep breath. By the time he had finished, Chris brought up several bottles of

water for the Lucario to drink in case of exhaustion. With two-thousand sit-ups completed, the Aura Pokémon looked at himself while the teen watched him. "… So?" Chris asked. "How do you feel?"

Whether the hot weather made him sweat or not, Lucario did feel stress in his veins and sweat on his fur. There was a slow speed in his last two-hundred sit-ups, making him realize that the training regimen was truly working. He had taken a step to the abs of his dreams, or so he and his inner Riolu thought with glee. "I can feel it… I do feel my energy going down…" the Lucario said with a content smile. "I think this is working out after all…"

The sudden spike of happiness coming from Chris's aura staggered Lucario. He mentally punched himself in the face, but the Riolu looked proud with his little chest sticking up. "Really? It's working? Oh, I'm so glad for you!" Chris said, his words showing how strong his positive aura was. "I thought I was going overboard with two-thousand sit-ups, but it hit the spot, right?"

Lucario was confused now. Training his body with such crazy goals was clouding his mind with what he was trying to avoid doing with Chris. If he looked happy, it was going to make Chris happy, which in turn would make the Riolu have multiple field days in an hour, which would end up with him desperately trying to push Chris away as recklessly and subtlety as possible. When he saw his trainer's smile, Lucario gulped mentally. "(Ack, focus, Lucario!) U-uh, yes, it hit the spot. Six spots, I hope…" He rubbed his stomach quickly.

The feeling of happiness coming from Chris's aura dimmed down to a normal level, mostly because his owner couldn't quite tell why the Lucario was rubbing his stomach the way he was doing it. Was he that desperate to grow muscles or something? "… Um… You do know the muscles won't come out quickly in a day, right? You'll have to be doing this routine like a thousand times or so to see results… I think. I never took a liking to working out myself."

The rubbing stopped suddenly when Lucario looked back at Chris's quizzical look. "I… I know that," Lucario said. "(… This seems like a good time to look offended so he doesn't… doesn't… doesn't…)" He was having a mental breakdown when he saw his chance to act like a jerk to Chris. But truthfully, being a jerk wasn't in his nature. Outright crushing the teen's kind attitude was too much to do or even begin with. Lucario had his chance to do it when he first came into the world, but that chance was lost forever. Moreover, the inner Riolu was frowning, wondering why he needed to look so negative for no reason. The reason was his original trainer, not the absolutely wonderful person helping him out!

… Oh, *crap!* Where did those adjectives come from? Was the giggling Riolu's fault? The Lucario was going to lose it quickly if he didn't act faster!

All of his troublesome thoughts halted when he heard Chris chuckling. "Don't you worry, okay?" Chris said with a welcoming look on his face. "I have truly never seen a buff Pokémon like you in TV or somewhere else, but… I'll help you out in becoming the strongest being ever, and you will look the part just as you want."

Just thinking about the godly body of his dreams put Lucario's thoughts in high gear. "Absolutely wonderful!" the Riolu beamed with glee. Lucario was quick to hide the single tear that his right eye shed. "(That was a very close call… Why… why am I getting so sentimental? Why can't I deny his help?)" Honestly, Chris thought it was just sweat and nothing more.

"So let's continue with these crazy workout routines, but you should drink some water first" Chris offered. He handed a bottle of water to Lucario, who hoped the water flowing down his throat would drown his insecurities. The only thing the water did was make it rain softly for the Riolu to rejoice.

For the next workout, it wasn't exactly workout. Chris had suggested Lucario to stay balanced in one foot and not touch the floor with the other unless he were to fall. Easy enough, the tall Pokémon stood on

one foot and even put his palms together to meditate in peace. All he needed now was a waterfall to crash down on his head and shoulders, which he actually asked Chris. "Can you?"

"Not unless I took you to one…" Chris said. "I never understood why letting a waterfall fall on you is considered training. Does it do anything?"

Lucario didn't know. His mind just automatically suggested him to add that after he had watched an anime with a scene like that… and said scene had a buff, strong-looking guy to boot. He hoped his dream wasn't masquerading itself to reveal he was *into* buff guys. He wanted to be one, not be *with* one! "I think it does… I mean, why would they go through the trouble to do it? It doesn't look that bad to me."

"But for me, it does. All that water falling down on you… My bones would probably shatter apart," Chris said, shrugging afterward. He looked at the clock on the wall. "I should see what we're going to eat for the afternoon, so I'll leave you to do your balancing act." Nodding, the teen went back to the first floor.

Lucario sighed. The less time he spent with the human, the better it was for him to remain relaxed… The Riolu was barking angrily that the attention was gone from him, however. He was tossing a tantrum, wishing that the absolutely wonderful human would come back soon to see him. Little by little, Lucario started to feel… abandoned, even if it looked ridiculous since Chris wasn't gone.

"(… Am I really fated to be with him?)" Lucario thought, his body balanced in a perfect position. "(Is it useless for me to try to push him away from me? Just the thought of trying to start being rude to him is so but so wrong… He clearly wants the best for me, and even my body language…)" To his dismay, his long tail started to wag a bit. He blushed and desperately tried to calm it down, succeeding after five seconds. "(This accursed tail of mine says more than my own words! How could that be possible? This isn't fair to me! I don't want to be with him forever!)" While the Riolu giggled that his older

self was slowly resigning to his cruel ideas, Lucario glared into space and looked around the living room to distract his mind but not so much as to lose his balance…

There was a photo on top of a small table.

Raising a curious eyebrow, Lucario squinted his eyes to focus on the picture… It was a picture of a much younger Chris being held by his father on his left arm, with his mother rubbing his son's head. All three of them were smiling happily, with the background having a big tree and a wall. The Aura Pokémon recognized the setting as the backyard, simply because the tree didn't look at that different from today. His eyes slowly drifted to the young Chris's sunny look so full of happiness with his family. No doubt his aura was so vibrant and full of energy back then, Lucario thought. A long stare at Chris's smile made Lucario smile as well, as if he was the reason the kid in the picture was smiling…

Then his smile went away when he looked at Chris's parents. "(I wonder if things would've been different if any of them was here,)" Lucario thought. "(Now I'm the source of his happiness, or so his aura waves tell me so… But… Didn't he get sad when his parents went away from home? I would if my parents left me behind for a good reason… Huh… My parents… Damn it, I had never seen their faces when I was born into the world…)" Lucario felt his balance leaning to the left, to which he gasped and quickly readjusted himself. "(And now I'm getting melancholic over that. Just my luck…)"

The troublesome thoughts kept piling on as he kept the firm balance on his foot. Luckily, he started to think about the godly body of his future, which was perhaps a guilty pleasure that he was willing to use just to forget about his stress over his heritage and, most importantly, the absolutely wonderful human in the house. He grunted to himself when he described Chris with those words; words the Riolu cherished greatly.

After doing several rounds of going back up and down to check on Lucario, Chris's fourth visit was the last one Lucario was willing to receive, dropping his somewhat numb right foot on the floor. "Three hours and you didn't lose your balance?" Chris said in complete admiration. "Unbelievable… You really think you need to keep on training?"

In retrospect, distracting himself with the size his body would get in the future wasn't such a good idea. "I won't stop until my biceps match the size of basketballs… or those bowling balls I've seen on TV. This thin body shall bulk up so much that even you won't recognize me till I speak," Lucario said confidently, to which then he blushed a bit and frowned. Obviously, the Riolu wanted that to happen soon. "(Oh Arceus, what in the hell was that that I just said?)"

Chris could only blink awkwardly at the description. He thanked himself that he was never so good at imagining such images. "I… see…" he trailed off. "Uh… well… here to your great future?"

"Uh… yes… my great future indeed," Lucario said. "(Just what I needed: I'm turning into a muscle-head… No, I'm turning into a Machoke trapped in a Lucario's body.)"

The teen looked to the sides and scratched his head. "Does… um… getting super buff has to do anything about learning how to use Aura Sphere?" he asked. Lucario's eyes widened. Somewhere along his routines, he had forgotten the main reason why he was working out in the first place. "If that's true, I'm kind of scared about how Pokémon look down there in your world…"

Certainly, his species weren't gods of massive manly (womanly?) testosterone. Knowing that made Lucario feel disappointed, until the Riolu for once tried to help him by barking at him that that was not the point to focus on. "N-no, I'm sure they're not that huge… uh… strong! Yes, strong…"

"… A-anyway!" Chris spoke up, trying to stop blushing at the disturbing thoughts. "Your third routine for the day has ended. We're going to be moving on to something else on the list."

"… I… wish to stop this for now if you don't mind," Lucario said. Chris didn't react oddly. "I shouldn't probably overdo it today. I have all the time in the world to pace myself and make this happen."

"Make what happen?" Chris asked.

Grow gigantic muscles, of course! The Lucario grunted mentally when he immediately thought of that. To focus correctly, he thought about a blue sphere that represented the Aura Sphere… which then somehow turned into a sphere representing his bicep flaring with aura. He once more yelled at himself. "L-l-learn Aura Sphere! T-that's what I'm talking about," he said, stuttering more than he thought he would do so by accident.

"(This conversation is turning extremely awkward now… I-I have to help him - and by extension myself - to thinking about other stuff!)" Chris thought alarmed. "S-so yeah, I decided to make steaks for today again! Never mind we had it for leftovers for yesterday's dinner! I-I mean, you like steaks, don't you?"

Lucario's distracting thoughts were replaced by rows of steaks blocking his perturbing muscular body. "(Screw it. This is far less arousing-looking… Dammit, I thought the word up!)" he thought. "Y-yes, please! I want three steaks! I can burn the extra body fat tomorrow if I keep working out diligently!" The haunting thoughts were coming back to him, so he quickly pressured Chris to start walking (or running) back down to the kitchen. The teenager didn't mind at all because he was just as embarrassed about the whole thing that he wanted to forget about it as soon as possible. Even the Riolu looked perturbed. He wanted an Aura Sphere so badly…

Before he knew it, it was already night and Chris was sleeping soundly in front of him. With the peace of the moonlight filling the room, Lucario was glad that the most important resting event of the

day arrived. For once, he was truly focused on mastering the envisioned move his species was known around for. Truly his Aura Sphere would be the strongest there was, if Chris's opinions were true.

He couldn't quite go to sleep yet. Lucario stared at the teen's welcoming - if sleepy - expression. Something about Chris made Lucario feel closer to him… and it was around then that he had yet again failed to distance himself from him, though honestly, he cherished the feeling. It was a strange fuzzy feeling he didn't want to let go because it was relaxing him greatly. Thinking back about the embarrassing events of the day, Lucario chuckled. True, it was pure silliness about how they both reacted so flustered about the rather scandalous thoughts the Aura Pokémon brought up due to his wild mind running wild with the ideas, but still…

But still, it was hilarious to think back on it without dwelling in the past for too long. It was all the more enjoyable just knowing that Chris had been there with him.

It was the Riolu's cue to speak up, or so Lucario imagined as his inner younger self was seen resting on a cloudy bed. "You like him a lot, just like I like him a lot too!" the Riolu said. "You keep saying no to him, but I know better than that! It isn't so bad to stay with him in this house… He feeds you, he spends time with you, he teaches you stuff… and he even trains you! You and him are a wonderful duo! Imagine if you and him went out on a journey… You'd be stoppable!"

"(But… I'm not so sure yet…)" Lucario thought, looking worried at the happy look of the human. "(It's not fair for my trainer… She has to know I'm gone…)"

The Riolu sighed. "You don't have any memories of her, unlike all the new ones you've made with Chris! Really, it's futile to keep trying to go back to that old life you barely even knew about… You enjoy your new life to the fullest with him. Why throw it all away?"

"(…)" Lucario grunted and glared. "(Why am I even holding a conversation with a person who's clearly not even inside my mind?)" he shot back.

The Emanation Pokémon put up a dull look with a grin as he replied with, "Because you're making *me* exist and say all these nice things back to you, because you know them to be true and you're just playing hard to get, silly."

The large Aura Pokémon growled in frustration, though he did keep the loud growl inside his head as to not startle Chris's sleep. Despite his tired look, the conversation had ended with Lucario listening to the Riolu giggling. He took it as rude teasing, though the Riolu meant very well regardless. Deciding that he was going insane with his subconscious, Lucario yawned and lied down his over his crossed arms, not noticing that the scene in the room looked like he was keeping Chris safe. In the end, he fell asleep with a smile that later appeared on his lips.

The icing on the cake was the dream he had that same night: him standing in front of a large mirror reflecting what female Pokémon would describe as the manliest eye candy to ever walk on earth and male Pokémon would describe as the luckiest bastard ever. Instead of complete joy, the even larger Lucario said, "I have some other… *serious* issues I need to work out… on! On! I mean work on!"

The small Riolu suddenly appeared from his left and looked up at his massive self from below the towering knee area. "You know who made this happen in a month? It was Chris! He's the best!" he said with joy.

Lucario screamed and promptly punched the mirror to destroy the desirable-yet-undesirable image, thus ending the dream and him sleeping much better afterward.

It looks like this Lucario is going to be ready to make that Aura Sphere very soon now. Can't wait to see myself how Chris will react

to that, and also how this stubborn Pokémon will eventually surrender to his Riolu self.

Please do review soon, okay?

An Aura Sphere

… What? This story is still a thing, you know.

I encourage people who think hard work hardly works to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 13: An Aura Sphere

Summer Vacation was nearly over. Only two weeks left before Chris would have to return to school.

The rest of the time went flying by for both the normal teenager and the not-so normal creature who lived in his house. To Chris's chagrin, it didn't seem like he had made too much progress trying to bond with Lucario doing other stuff. The Aura Pokémon had taken it upon himself to keep training every day to unlock the power of the Aura Sphere. To Lucario's chagrin, it didn't seem like he had put too much stress into his bulk training as he had hoped, since he hardly noticed a small inch of mass jump out from any sides of his assumed-godly body. He speculated it was because he had eaten too much meat, but he learned that gave consumers a lot of protein and he hadn't eaten more of anything else… In truth, he was being too hasty. Results like those took time, just like trying to learn his staple technique that was heavily associated with his species.

Still, it was very nice of Chris for helping him out. He couldn't deny that… although he wanted to. The fight against his subconscious had been an arduous one that he feared he would lose. If only if he could apprehend that Riolu physically, he would win. But no, it had to be a fight of emotions that he couldn't control, and that same Riolu was represented by those bottled emotions that wanted to leak out to reveal how he truly felt about the human taking his time to show him so much. The problem with his boggled memories about the past that had his real trainer is what was keeping him back from

"replacing" the person he liked the most, but sometimes he wondered if his past was a lie and he was living reality…

… He couldn't think it was a lie. It would be a great disgrace if he thought that was a big lie. Then, he would get into a big dilemma thinking what had been real and what had been a lie. What he was living through right now was perfectly, painstakingly real and it was that fact that made him feel so uncomfortable other than not knowing how to do that move.

If that large piece of steak lying down Lucario's snout wasn't making him move for the final blow using his fangs, Chris knew something was up from his seating position right next to Lucario. It was already afternoon's daily meal and just until that moment Lucario was being his normal self. Concerned that depression had set in, Chris decided to interrupt the creature's thoughts. "Are you doing okay there?" he asked. "Is there something different with the steak I made today?"

Lucario then shook his head to snap out from his thoughts and come back to reality. "What now? Oh, no. There's nothing different (apart from my past…)" he said and thought. When he took a big sniff from his meaty food, he had hoped to start tearing that thing apart with his utensils, though he started doing it very slowly, much to his dismay. And even when he accelerated to give Chris a false impression, the teen wasn't fooled. Something was wrong.

Now the new question was whether to press the creature for more info or not. During times of stress from a person who was more prone to acting angry, it wasn't advised to get them to talk about it right away. But maybe it would be possible to reach somewhere as long as Chris was careful about it. Feeling that he could do that, the teen armed himself with courage and pressed on. With a clear and inviting voice, coupled with a worried look, Chris said, "Lucario… I know something is wrong with you. I've seen how you've been acting for the past few days."

The human was truly a dangerous opponent. While Lucario didn't doubt he could submit him using his physical strength, he felt weaker

on the emotion department; his supposed best trait of all. Then again, all the moping faces he put on for days were easy to spot. Lucario only sighed as he stopped eating.

"… It's okay," Chris reassured him. "You can tell me and I'll do everything I can to help you."

Take me back to my world, Lucario thought. "I… don't know how to put it into words," Lucario muttered.

"Is it the fact you haven't learned Aura Sphere yet?"

That was a good escape route to avoid telling Chris how he truly felt about everything. Lucario wasted no time in taking that path out of his main issue. Only time would tell when the teen would find out about that. "Yes… Yes, that's it," Lucario said, looking at him. "I've trained for so many days and yet I can't seem to do it right. It's starting to put me down…"

Chris looked worried. "You really want to learn that one move, don't you?"

"Of course. It's my signature move," he said. "Like a Venasaur has Solar Beam, I want to have my move in my skill set. Not having your signature move should feel like a crime."

"Unless the signature move was useless," Chris added. "I think a Magikarp hates to know Splash."

"Probably… So… I really want to learn my move soon. I just know I'm very close to grasping it with both hands…"

"Well… Have you tried to do that pose for the move yet?"

"I've done that a few times, though the pose itself is irrelevant," Lucario explained. "It should be easy to do with one hand, but with both hands my focus in slightly stronger and easier to concentrate

my aura flow… but it's not enough. I wish to know what's keeping me from learning it already."

Chris recalled Lucario was at a low level when he last saw him on his little DS screen, though it was a great surprise he was much stronger than his appearance and level suggested when he was able to lift his bed with one hand and chop wood effortlessly. If every other Pokémon was like him, he wondered why there hadn't been any deaths in the game or why young children were trusted to have those nukes with them. "… Maybe you should try pursuing other stuff?" Chris suggested.

"If it's another housecleaning skill, I don't think that has anything to do with my potential."

"N-no, I didn't mean that," the teen said. "Since you started doing training, I noticed all you've been doing is train your body and meditate, but… maybe… well… You're the Aura Pokémon, aren't you? Wouldn't it be easier for you to do the move if you used your aura for other stuff?" Lucario stared, though it didn't help that red-eyed glare he was stuck to wear intimidated Chris a bit. "That could be it, couldn't it? Aura Sphere and your aura ability are closely related to the same thing, so… why not dwell a little more on your aura to get a feel to it?"

"Hmm…" Lucario got into deep thought. The human was probably right on that. Lucario hadn't used his aura much for so many days that he felt it was starting to become forgotten. Aside from the occasional and quick landscape check, there wasn't much else to use his aura for… except avoid the tempting thoughts of reading Chris's inner mind for what he truly thought about Lucario. But whenever he did that, the teen meant everything he said. "… I must get reacquainted with my aura skill," he finally said with a small nod. "I need to temper it. My body and mind have been sharpened, but not my own innate skill. I shall start to use my aura a lot more from now."

Feeling that they had arrived at an answer, Chris smiled a bit. "I'll cheer you on from here," he said. "You have my full support."

"In that case, I'll start now."

"Wait, what?"

Lucario simply closed his eyes, and he released the aura energy contained in him in the form of slow moving flames that crackled silently all over his body. The teen was very surprised that the Aura Pokémon set himself on aura fire, but he knew well the blue flames were harmless to the touch. Inside that flaming aura, Lucario became one with his sixth sense by sensing and feeling the world through his second method of eyesight. Although the world he saw through that set of eyes was all matted in blue fire, he could perceive shapes very well, especially the ones belonging to humans that weren't aware that a supernatural being like him was walking around. The aura waves that defined the landscape were calm and peaceful, while the aura waves coming from living beings were very varied in wavelength and strength. The one right next to him radiated pure waves of awe. "This is how I'll will see the world until I can learn the Aura Sphere," Lucario spoke, his physical eyes under his eyelids turning to the teen's aura. "Perhaps this is the only way I can get to it faster than just sharpening my mind and body."

If Chris hadn't known any better, he would have already tossed a bucket full with water on the large jackal. Since he did know better, he could only watch in awe at the glowing Aura Pokémon. "A-are you sure you'll be fine like this?" he asked, nearly avoiding asking if Lucario was really on fire and was merely resisting it. "I mean, with your eyes closed and all…"

"It makes no much difference to me, because I can see where I'm going using my senses," Lucario reassured. "The only difference in eyesight is that everything is coated in blue aura, unless I find the odd red aura that indicates a soul is filled with negative emotions. Well, there's much less definition in objects because of this like color and sharper focus, but it doesn't matter much as I can tell very well

what the shapes are. Let my senses be my eyes and see the world through them."

"Okay…"

That being said, the Aura Pokémon stood up and started walking away to the second floor without ever opening his eyes and letting his senses be his guide around the world…

Chris blinked in curiosity until he noticed the food on Lucario's plate was almost nearly untouched. "Are you going to eat at all?" he asked.

The Aura Pokémon shamefully came back and sat down on his seat to start eating away, but true to his word, he never dared open his eyes to even eat and look down on his prey. In retrospective, eating his top favorite food with eyes closed made a curious sight: the aura covering his body would die down as he indulged himself in the meaty taste for a little too much, distracting him from his aura training until he was finished. Throughout the whole scene, Chris could tell that he was indirectly interfering with the plan… which he found very amusing since it only made Lucario look like a large blinking light bulb turning on and off.

Hours later after the experiment started, Chris had finished doing the usual house cleaning. More specifically, he was just about to finish washing the dishes. As he put a wet white plate aside, he became distracted when he looked outside the window to spot a plane flying in the sky to the west…

"(*You only have that red bowl left to wash, Chris. That plane moves slow when looked at from afar.*)"

That mental call startled the teen a bit, but not as much when he had taken those telepathy messages that one time when he and Lucario relaxed inside the pool. His attention went back to washing the last dish to finish his routine. "I wasn't going to stare at it for too long…" he mumbled as he looked over his right shoulder to talk to Lucario…

He was nowhere in sight around the dining table or the living room in the background.

"…" As his hands instinctively closed the faucet, the teen blinked in confusion until he realized the Aura Pokémon was last seen upstairs, sitting down on the mattress in a meditative position while facing the terrace doors. Telepathy sure was handy for Lucario, Chris thought, because it allowed him to tell what the boy was doing and looking at without being there in person. It was only until the teen's uncontrolled gaze rested on the red bowl that Lucario had told him about using only his aura senses…

…

…

…

After idly staring at the bowl, something clicked in Chris's mind. Lucario had told him that his aura vision let him see the shapes of objects matted in blue aura. He also said the bit about not being able to tell anything else beside shapes, so if that was true, how was he able to tell the bowl was red in the first place? The teen had a good memory and he didn't remember handing Lucario a red bowl in the morning, so there was no way he could tell the color away as there had been more bowls to clean prior to the red one… And the plane… That one was discarded as simply him using that super radius of his when using his senses, but as for the bowl…

Did he lie to Chris?

The teen didn't really feel the need to confront Lucario about something as small as that was. He wanted to avoid every wrong chance to make the tall behemoth snap out even slightly.

"(*Yes, Chris. That green slime on the wall is really glaring. But do you have to stare at it for too long? Or is there some kind of hidden purpose?*)"

What the…

Chris then noticed that, during his idle stare, he had been staring at a gooey matter on the wall that was left behind from a fly that had annoyed him to no end minutes before it met its demise under the flyswatter. Again, the mention of another color threw him off, and it wasn't even that large enough to spot standing from afar. Never mind what he said before. Chris had to find out what was going on. Looking up to the ceiling, he asked, "There's no hidden purpose. I was just simply thinking about something you said a moment ago that made me think something…" he said, unsure if Lucario heard him.

He did. "(*What is on your mind?*)" Lucario asked through the telepathy.

"Nothing much… except… Hey," Chris then grabbed a random green bowl from the basket. "What's this that I'm holding?"

"(*A bowl.*)"

"What's its color?"

"(*Green.*)"

"And what did you say about recognizing shapes when using your aura senses?"

"(*That I could only perceive the shapes of objects except colo…*)" Lucario suddenly paused abruptly, making Chris raise an eyebrow in a suspicious manner. "(… *Chris, please, I'm trying to focus here.*)"

"Oh, no you don't!" the teen said, looking angry. "You said earlier you couldn't perceive colors with your senses until you slipped up thrice a few seconds ago! How is it that you can suddenly tell the color?"

"(*B-because I'm relying on your eyesight to see what you see through your eyes.*)"

That bit of info was both new and strange to hear all of a sudden. "… What now?" he asked. "My eyesight? What? I mean… *What?* " After that, he just heard mumbling sounds and stuttering; clear signs that Lucario didn't know what to say about what he just said. Getting a little worried that something bad might happen if he didn't act fast, Chris hurriedly went upstairs to confront the Aura Pokémon in person. He found him on the exact same spot he last saw him, though now he had opened his startled eyes to look up at the human. "Okay, all I recall a few seconds ago is that you saw what I was seeing… through me? What?"

Fortunately, by the time Chris had gone up to the second floor, Lucario managed to scramble up a weak statement. "W-while I was using my aura to navigate my surroundings, I suddenly got curious and I went back to check up on yours… Um… One thing led to another and… well… I suddenly found myself seeing what you were seeing through your eyes," the Aura Pokémon explained. "… In full color," he added hastily.

The teen was now both surprised and perturbed to hear that new fact. "… Again, what now?"

Lucario sighed. He found it right to talk about his little discovery, though he felt bad that Chris's little moment of weakness let him look serious. "You remember the talk we had, right?" he asked, and Chris nodded. "I realized too late that the color fact was… corrected… but at the same time, it wasn't corrected."

"… You're making me get lost more and more, you know," the human said with a dull look, easing his stance. "What exactly happened that let you see everything in color without using your eyes?"

"You."

"And now this turned very awkward," Chris muttered, looking embarrassed as he went to sit down on a nearby couch to relax. "Seriously. What happened?"

It was a good time to relax, Lucario thought. He needed to rest after doing his little experiment for hours to no end. The Aura Pokémon sighed slowly and stared at Chris. "This is rather embarrassing to say coming from someone who should know, but it seems I don't have a complete understanding of my aura senses as I thought," he said. "It could be the main reason why Aura Sphere seems impossible for me to pull off…"

"I didn't think you actually had issues with your aura senses as a whole…" Chris trailed off in thought, concerned about that crestfallen look Lucario put up. "It's even weirder how there are issues at all. You're really not like other Lucario I've seen. You're really tall and really strong, and you told me you can sense auras from miles away from here…"

Lucario felt a little proud to be remarked like that out of nowhere, though he knew that wasn't the point of the statements. "Sensing auras miles away looks like an early gift from the rest I can get after getting enough awareness," he said. "The finding I found earlier is proof of that, I think."

"Finding…?"

"Yes, the finding I found while I was looking at the world with my aura senses," Lucario said with a small nod. "As I surveyed the world through its own aura essence, I wandered about and spotted the auras of human beings and those strange creatures that aren't Pokémon."

"Animals and pets."

"Uh, yes, those," Lucario said awkwardly, still not used to calling anything else other than a human by those terms. "I grew a little curious when I started to focus on those auras specifically, you see. As you know, I can use telepathy to communicate from far distances or to be silent about my conversations, which is possible due to my senses creating a mental link with another aura. But as I focused too much into a random stranger's aura to dwell in their mind… I

suddenly found myself entering their psyche when I calibrated the wavelength to match theirs. That was enough to somehow enter their bodies in a sense where I was able to use their normal vision to see the world in color, unlike how I described earlier. They don't even notice I'm using them as my vision beacons."

"Uh… Wow… That's really amazing…" Chris trailed off, unaware that he was smiling a bit. "So you're telling me you can use other people's eyes to see the world without using your aura vision?"

"It appears to be that way, yes," Lucario said, looking proud of his little achievement. "Well, I can also read their thoughts while they look. Not only that, but I can also hear what they say and hear from where I am. I could hear the rushing sound of water and the clanking sounds of the plates downstairs using your ears without relying on mine."

"T-that's even more amazing! I think you really discovered a very helpful ability using your sixth senses!" the teen said with utter amazement. The Riolu in Lucario's subconscious stuck his little chest out proudly. "Just think about the possibilities you have using that!"

"Um… I do believe it's a useful ability to have, but I don't know if I like to deprive people from their privacy," Lucario said with a forced smile. He was lying a bit on that regard, because he had been fooling around with the ability long before he got into Chris's aura. Long story short, the mild of a child on a sugar rush was hard to keep up with. "F-forgive me for using it on you earlier. I got a little too carried away with it that I didn't notice too soon I was getting in your personal space."

"It's kind of okay… The most important thing is that you managed to master a truly wonderful skill, right?" Chris asked. "This could be proof enough that there's more about your aura skill than meets the eye."

The Aura Pokémon looked a little disappointed, however, when he remembered why he was doing this. "I wonder if learning Aura Sphere will take more time than anticipated because I haven't mastered all those hidden skills you speak of…"

The cheerful mood had come to a complete stop all of a sudden, which erased the truthful smile on Chris's face. He felt a lot of sympathy for Lucario's disappointment. "B-but it'll be okay if you keep this up!" he tried to cheer up hastily. "Don't think you're a lost cause! You're an amazing aura user! You were able to unearth this amazing skill with your aura so there's no way you'll fail at your true goal!" The lonely teen failed to realize that his last encouraging words had come out a little too strong and honest, but Lucario didn't also realize he liked the support very much as he, with renewed spirits, smiled once more at the teen. The Riolu was overly happy for the strong and kind words. "Who knows. At the end of this long training, I can only imagine your Aura Spheres will be extremely powerful to handle!"

Lucario chuckled. "Maybe they will… Maybe you do have a good point in that," he admitted as he stuck out his right open palm facing up, his right arm enveloped in a calm and soothing aura glow. "I… I really appreciate the support. Thank you…" The Aura Pokémon *then* realized he had just indirectly made a closer bond with the human, much to his shameful mental groan. But in the end, he just had to suck it up and accept the move without making faces or else he would look like a big jerk in front of him. Lucario had to keep up with the friendly look lest he wanted to ruin his image. His eyes drifted to his right open palm… and it was right around then that he felt like a door blocking the aura flow from his psyche had been opened, allowing him to feel a rush of power forming quickly on that same limb empowered by his life force. "Grrrrrr…"

The random growling sound made Chris wary of Lucario's tough look. That sound triggered a sense of danger somehow. "W-what's wrong? W-why are you growling now?" Chris asked, fearful that he had screwed up somewhere in his conversation.

The glow on Lucario's right arm seemed to be moving forward to where his open palm was and leaving the rest of the arm bare with no signs of power, only adding up to the intensity of the sacred force that was building up right above the palm's thin air. As the glowing started to take shape into weak but concentrated trails of wind forming within the still floor, Lucario's growling sounds grew with intensity, as if he was trying to wrestle furiously what was trying to appear above his palm to avoid letting it run wild and destroy blindly anything in its path without his command. The gushing winds grew all the more intense as they circled above thin air, where the aura gathering around the palm was taken into the wind to form trails of rippling aura waves in circular, curved lines. "GRRRRRR…" Lucario's growls came out louder, baring his sharp fangs wide. He could feel the rushing power building up faster as the trails of aura started circling faster, eventually making a round glow of light that was also catching itself ablaze with a blue flame of life. The round dot started to grow faster with every second, until it eventually reached the size a little above of that of a basketball. Once upon reaching that size, the sphere of blue flames came to a stop just as soon as Lucario let out a bestial " ***GUUUUUUUUAAAAAAAAARRRRRRGGGGGGGGHHHHHH!*** " while staring intensely at it.

The wind forming around the sphere had died down once it completed its appearance. During the whole ordeal, Chris had taken a meager shield behind the right arm of the couch he was sitting on, because he knew it would be futile to run away from the demi god with super strength. But once silence settled in, he slowly and carefully rose up from his hiding spot, and his eyes then dilated in utter shock and surprise at what he and Lucario were looking at. Above Lucario's right open palm, there was a hovering, mystical blue orb of life energy pulsating calmly. Said sphere was none other than a true Aura Sphere; a powerful weapon meant to do harm and destroy its targets. Though, despite that description, it was somewhat soothing to watch without having to see it actually blow up. Behind that floating sphere, Lucario was looking astonished at it, albeit he was keeping a steady and firm control on it. He could hardly

believe that he had managed to actually materialize the one move he trained so hard to learn, his eyes staring intently at it for a long time.

After a few seconds of silence passed between both staring at the Aura Sphere, Lucario moved his head to the left and told Chris, "Sorry for growling like that. It was a spur of the moment."

"… A-apology accepted, but still…" Chris kept staring. "… Y-you did it! You learned Aura Sphere!"

That confirmation made it official to Lucario, who then decided to smile and chuckle confidently with pride at his achievement. He could sense the raw life energy attached to his own being through an invisible aura link, and he was sure that he could control it at will if he wanted… Then again, he wasn't so sure about that, so he forewent asking Chris for permission to move the sphere around and did just that out of a pure reckless adrenaline rush. The Aura Pokémon slowly made the sphere float around his reach using his own will to test how well he could handle it, and he was happy to know that he was able to tame the living sphere of life like a true master of aura. To his quiet surprise, Chris didn't seem to mind much to see the sphere move about. Lucario could sense the pure feeling of awe radiating from the human's aura.

At last, Lucario learned Aura Sphere.

After circling around his self, the Aura Sphere went back to floating above his palm. "It is done… I've done it…" Lucario trailed off, his eyes reflecting the blue glow. "This is what I've been working so hard for…"

"And you have such a good control over it. I didn't know you could move that around like it's nobody's business," Chris said. He had a hard time taking his eyes off from the orb. "Congratulations, Lucario!"

"Thank you," Lucario said with a smile at him. "I feel like all the stress I had to put it with is long gone now that I can see this up-close with my own eyes…" It was rather odd for the Aura Pokémon

to say that so simply, because he thought the world was right with him. His mind had been distracted when Chris cheered him up earlier. When he recalled that moment, Lucario couldn't believe that he didn't try to brush him off. Not brushing him off proved to be a real stress-reliever, and Lucario didn't want to admit that. The Riolu inside of him pouted, knowing better than his adult persona. Shaking his head to avoid thinking too deeply about that, Lucario went back to focusing on his pulsating Aura Sphere.

The teen then recalled that the sphere was meant to do lots of harm. "U-um…" He stuttered just as he recalled that, backing off a bit and alerting Lucario. "S-say, isn't that meant to hurt people?"

"Uh… Well… Yes…" Lucario said, sounding awkward when he was reminded of that. The last thing he wanted was Chris fearing him. That thought felt extremely terrible just thinking about it more than simply disliking it. Back on the matter at hand *and* on his palm, it would be a waste if he didn't get to show off his move in the way it was intended. "… Do you know someone you particularly hate and many others do?"

"LUCARIO!"

"N-never mind!" Lucario hastily said, feeling very ashamed for implying that. "I-I mean, there has to be someone…" He sweated bullets when Chris forced a glare his way. "S-something I could use this on…"

Chris was not an idiot. He knew full well that this Lucario was not normal at all. He was tall. He was super strong. He could sense auras miles away. It stood to reason that Aura Sphere would not simply blow up in a five foot explosion and could possibly be much more destructive all because of its owner. Target practice was not advised. "How about you don't try logging that thing at all?" Chris suggested, crushing Lucario's spirit for seeing the sphere blow up. "You learned the move. Isn't that more than enough to you? If it's meant to destroy, I'd hate to see it actually destroy anything in here."

"It can't be used to destroy… It can be a tame sphere," Lucario said as he examined the sphere.

"What? I thought that was meant to hurt enemies…"

"No, I think I can make it be just a sphere of aura not meant to explode… Here." The Aura Pokémon simply stuck his left hand into the sphere. The sphere's aura didn't react violently when it came into contact with its owner's hand; something that surprised Chris when he saw it happen. Smiling a bit, Lucario looked at Chris. "You could stick your hands in there and feel its raw power through your aura, even."

"…" Chris stared.

"Try it. It won't hurt you."

The human blinked. "W-what? Oh, I-I see…" He gulped at the actual idea to stick his hands into that blue nuke floating eerily in the air. After a few seconds of silent staring, he was hesitant to approach it at all. "I-I'm having second thoughts about this. Are you sure it won't explode on you only just because you made it?"

"I can tell you with a straight face that this won't explode," Lucario said. "It has a direct connection with my psyche. If I were to take a wild guess, the other Pokémon who are able to use this move surely cannot even hope to move it around their selves like I did a moment ago, so in the end it is a weapon and nothing more to them. But to me, I bring out its true potential."

"Which is…"

"A technically stronger Aura Sphere meant to do massive damage." When Chris's right eye twitched, Lucario realized what he had just said. "I mean… An Aura Sphere that can do much more than simply damaging foes. Why, I can probably let it bounce around to connect with this world's life energy… like this." He let go of the sphere. Chris ducked when he saw the moment the orb started to fall on the floor,

but when it landed on the floor, it did bounce a bit on it, making him rose up quickly from his pathetic shield behind the couch's arm. He was even more amazed when he saw the sphere act like a really mundane ball with a rather awesome visual effect added to it. With Chris's doubts cleared, Lucario nodded. "See now?"

"… Dear goodness, it took you a short amount of time to get very acquainted with this move?" Chris asked. The Aura Pokémon blinked at that comment. "Seriously. It's like everything poured down on you the moment you learned it. Pokémon surely know how to learn things really fast in record time."

"I don't think I *really* learned that fast," Lucario said, though he wanted to show off that he was special. "I just have a very close understanding and attachment to my aura skill that it was easy to tame this Aura Sphere quickly and it took some time to actually make the move come out of me if you remember… I probably will have a rougher time trying to master other non-aura moves like Close Combat…" He blinked when he thought about that other move. "Now I want to know Close Combat."

"No way. You're getting too excited now, and that one move is surely *not* for mundane activities."

"Perhaps I am excited and I want to put that move for mundane activities," Lucario chuckled, making Chris chuckle heartily a bit. "I'm getting a little ahead of myself, though. I can sense how you feel better, so why don't you try holding this Aura Sphere with both hands? Go ahead. It won't hurt you."

Once he was back to staring at the Aura Sphere on the floor, Chris gulped. He didn't know for sure why he was doing this until he recalled he had to trust Lucario's words to make him like him even more as a person of trust. Steeling himself with courage, the human teen stood up from the couch and crouched down to pick the sphere with both hands. He gasped a little when he could feel something solid even before touching the outline of the sphere, and he gasped once more when he unwillingly raised his hands and dragged the

sphere up unintentionally… But when Chris found himself holding the very Aura Sphere over his hands, he breathed out in surprise just as Lucario stood upright from his spot to watch the human look utterly awed at the orb of life. Just holding the sphere in midair between his hands was enough for Chris to feel a rather powerful feeling leaking out from every corner of the sphere itself, and it was more apparent when his hands and arms started to glow with his own aura brought out by the sphere itself, watching his intangible soul's energy mix up with the sphere's own aura as if making a link through aura alone that he couldn't control. He thought this was a big trick of magic, but it felt nothing like any other thing he had experienced before (except for maybe a freak accident in drinking coffee at a young age, but that was nothing like this).

"Hooooooooly *crap*," Chris muttered under his breath. Lucario chuckled. The Riolu in his head chuckled loudly and proudly. "L-look at me! I'm holding an Aura Sphere! A-a-ahahahaha! This is amazing! Can I pretend I made this? Because this is so amazing!" he said cheerfully, thinking that the sphere's overwhelming energy was making him go in high gear instead of his rather increased emotion of joy.

"Sorry, but I'll have to reveal that it was me who made that," Lucario said, calmly putting his palm over the sphere to claim possession of it…

Lucario was very much aware that, at that one moment alone, he felt revitalized when he made contact with the Aura Sphere again. Somehow, feeling the sphere's aura was rather different than before because of something he didn't foresee happen. Due to how the sphere had made contact with Chris's aura to bring it out to see with the naked eye, the sphere acted as a conduit that brought Lucario's and Chris's aura together as they both were close to it. That event in turn made Chris aware of what had happened, because he could also feel just as revitalized as Lucario had felt. The two immediately gasped the first thing the connection was made, but Lucario, shocked to feel such positive feeling mix with his, called off the Aura

Sphere and made it disappear in thin air. The two then backed off from each other but didn't avert their gazes as they looked on surprised.

"W-what was that?" Chris asked.

"I-uh-well… Our auras kind of… connected to each other through the Aura Sphere… I didn't see that coming at all," Lucario said in relative shock. "I have never thought about letting our auras touch like that. That was rather shocking to… sense." He shook his head a bit to forget about that. "U-um… Are you okay, though? Do you feel strange? I don't want to find out I made you feel ill because of this…"

"Well…" Chris looked at himself and felt nothing out of the ordinary. "I feel fine… I don't feel like I gained a sixth sense or anything like that."

Lucario made a thorough search in Chris's aura and found nothing strange. "You're right on that. Nothing changed in your psyche."

"Phew. That's a relief…" the teen sighed and then smiled a bit. "But, you know, not that I want to repeat that again, but it… felt good in a supernatural way… you know? It's like I could feel something super nice flooding into me… Of course it was like that. You're a super Lucario." He blushed embarrassed and looked away when he noted that remark too late. Lucario himself also blushed. "Hooooo boy, I'm not thinking straight at all! A-and I mean thinking right! N-not about orientation…"

"I definitely think you're just… really letting your joyful emotions run wild after that, so I understand," Lucario said, still blushing but in truth secretly feeling tall and strong for hearing that compliment. The Riolu in his mind looked like he did not want the moment to end anytime soon. "… Thanks for the compliment, though."

Chris chuckled and slowly looked back up at him. "You're welcome… always welcome," he muttered the last part. The two unintentionally shared a brief silence sharing bright looks until Chris stammered.

"So! Uh… You learned Aura Sphere! That was a real big achievement for you."

Lucario nodded. "Of course. I feel much better now that I replaced Roar willingly for it."

The teen's smile went away over a grimace when he stopped to think. "… Wha…?"

"Uh, Pokémon logic I can't comprehend very well. I wish I had more than four moves in my arsenal but… Oh, who cares. Don't think too much about it, Chris," Lucario said with a long shrug. "Yes…"

"… Okay, but I'll think too much about it later. I just want to tell you that you did it at last," the teen said nodding.

"Yes, but it's kind of disappointing that I won't be able to see how powerful it is when it is meant to explode," Lucario said. "I can feel the raw power, but to see it blow up would give me a more accurate display…"

"I'm sorry, but… It's not going to happen," Chris said with a stern look. "I implore you that you do not fling an Aura Sphere at something on the ground."

Lucario then got an idea when he heard the last word. "… What if I flung it high into the sky, then?"

"What? I don't know how that would go… It might scare people if they see a random poof in the sky."

Lucario's eagerness was getting the better of him, though the Riolu inside of him wanted to impress Chris with his power. "I promise it won't cause a stir. We can see it together from the terrace. If I send it far too high where no planes are flying, it'll be okay."

"… I just don't know, really," Chris said.

"Trust me," Lucario said, forcing a serious look. "I've trusted you for weeks. Please, just trust me this one."

Those words either hurt or made Chris feel so much better. It was the best way to get even closer to the behemoth. Denying him now after the rush of excitement would possibly kill their trust. Pressed a little by the suggestion, Chris eventually nodded. "Fine. If you really know it'll be okay, you can do it… But only once, okay?"

The Aura Pokémon fought the temptation to wag his tail once. "Thank you, Chris. I swear, it'll be a moment to remember," he said right before turning around and opening the doors of the terrace. A reluctant Chris followed the Aura Pokémon from behind and sighed. He chuckled despite the fact Lucario had just convinced him to use the dreadful move in the air just to watch it explode. The teen thought it was more surprising to watch the sphere float about without causing collateral damage than actually seeing it try to kill something, but at least it wouldn't be so bad to just watch it go off in the air. It would most likely just look like a firework. Those thoughts helped the human ease his mind as he watched the cocky Lucario charge an Aura Sphere - surprisingly in less than a second - and blast it high up to the air…

One week later…

A bright and quiet morning was greeted by the curtains of the living room shyly opening in the middle for a small hole between to let a cautious eye to peek outside into the wild outdoors of the neighborhood. It looked like there weren't any policemen patrolling the area and advising people to make a run for it for the next random terrorist attack that had happened a week ago. Still, the place looked too much deserted for Chris's dismay and Lucario's horror. There used to be innocent passerby walking down the sidewalks, but not after… *that* happened that pretty much terrorized even the most stone-faced adults when it was made public through the media. Or, more precisely, when everyone heard it going off.

As the ringing of the phone suddenly buzzed off and made Chris yelp after it broke the silence, Lucario was meanwhile burying his ashamed look on his hands while sitting on the couch; a practice he had himself gotten used to doing in the past few days. He didn't bother to watch the human pick up the phone to accept the call coming from the same caller: his concerned parents.

"O-oh, hey, mom. Nice to hear from you again," Lucario would hear. "What? Oh no, everything's still okay. Sure, outside it looks eerily empty, but, other than that, everything's fine with me. I'm brave enough to go out and take the mail… I've made the payments for the bills too. Don't worry about those. S-so! How are you and Dad doing?"

The conversation would carry on like that for minutes, but Lucario was not blind to the world outside by just covering his eyes. He could visibly feel Chris's gaze directed to him whenever the teen's aura would suddenly get all anxious and make him stutter words while talking to his mother. The Aura Pokémon's own image was scaring him. Great, now I can get others scared of me with one look at my back, Lucario thought sarcastically. His dignity was being plucked off bit by bit, and the Riolu inside his head was sitting down on a corner to reflect what he had done wrong on that fateful day when he had become related to some Iraq country he had never heard of before. Chris's explanation of that only made things worse because Lucario never considered himself a terrorist related to those people with the strange hats and long beards. Then again, Chris had wisely said to him the words "all terrorists are Muslims, but not all Muslims are terrorists."

"I'm not a Muslim or whatever they are, Chris," Lucario shot back, though he liked, albeit just a bit, that he learned some current history lesson without reading about it. All things considered, Lucario was neither a Muslim or a terrorist… though he started to fear he was the last one as the media hadn't stopped talking about it on TV whenever he tried to change channels to forget the freak accident.

On the plus side, America would strengthen their defenses and bolster the war effort on.

"Alright, Mom. See you later! I'll be fine… I just know something like that will never happen again. I have this hunch." Chris turned to Lucario, who then looked up to show Chris his disheartened expression. The teen reflected that with his own. "I'll be just fine," he added with a somber look before hanging up and putting the phone down on the table. Sighing very slowly, he went over to sit next to Lucario to pat his strangely sweaty back caused by the feeling of sheer humiliation he had endured for days now. "I'm sorry for asking this again, but I'm extremely worried about you… How do you feel?"

"I feel like the world is just not ready to see me in the flesh for simply tossing an Aura Sphere in the air," Lucario said bluntly.

"It simply doesn't sound that simple…" Chris trailed off. "You didn't have the remotest clue that the Aura Sphere you blasted in the sky would technically take the size of three planes crashing together in midair and linger there for five minutes… and I suppose that booming sound wasn't all that far away from the ground for everyone in the neighborhood to hear and cause hysteric panic…" Lucario hung his head down. "… Admittedly, that Aura Sphere you launched was sort of too big, wasn't it? It was twice the size of your head. *(Holy crap*… Why didn't I just get a Riolu with no super strength thrown in?) "

"I-I think I got too excited that I didn't care about checking how much power I used on that one move alone… Damn it…" He curled his right hand into a fist and hit his right knee in shame. "I let my own emotions get the better of me. Now everyone thinks some foreign country wants this city out of the map."

Chris forced a very bad chuckling sound. "You at least sent the US Military an incentive to keep working harder?" he tried to cheer him up.

"That was never my intention." Lucario raised his head and looked down at Chris. "This… This is beyond embarrassing and shameful. You don't even know how bad I feel about this. I just *had* to get too cocky about learning Aura Sphere. I should've listened to you…"

"… Well, if you want the honest truth, I think so," Chris said, much to Lucario's expected dismay. Watching the big guy look depressed and feel small for days for that incident made Chris feel a lot of sorry; a far outcry to what that day signified for both of them when the Aura Sphere came forth. Ever since then, Lucario forbade himself from using the move even to practice moving it around in the air, though his endless sulking and downcast look was an added stressing feeling on top of the police force swarming the area to locate fictional dynamites and nukes. It was bad enough that Lucario had never flashed a smile. He didn't even have the strength to force one no matter how many times Chris tried to use words to mend him.

So, as a last ditch effort, Chris decided to hug Lucario from the side.

The Aura Pokémon got startled at the sudden move, blinking fast and looking down at him. Chris didn't say a thing. He just continued staring empty air to send Lucario a silent message that he had him for support anyway. Maybe the Riolu in him, alerted, stood up and tried to make Lucario return the hug, but the Aura Pokémon willingly ran his long and sturdy left arm behind the human's back and pulled him close to return the hug as well. As the silence continued between both of them, they were relieved to feel their lips curling into small smiles. Those actions were just enough for Lucario to break down an important barrier that he wished wasn't going to make him think he found a replacement.

"… Chris," Lucario began.

"Yes?" Chris asked.

"You're the best otherworldly friend I could ever have… Please, never let me succumb to my own misfortunes without fighting back."

"…" Lucario could vaguely feel the teen hugging him tighter. But that feeling was not as meaningful as the single tear his aura picked up when he had unwillingly used Chris's vision to see it shed. That tear was not meant to signify sadness but happiness. "It's the least I could do for you living here with me, you know…" Chris muttered.

Thinking back on the Aura Sphere, Lucario found out why he managed to pull it off on that one day. If hadn't been for the training. As a user who heavily relied on emotions and life itself, it was theoretically possible that the mental barrier he put up to keep Chris from getting too close to him acted like his own barrier to keep his skills from nourishing properly. It was vastly different to the aura sight upgrade he found out he had, as he recalled and replayed that moment in his head multiple times when that sudden power surged out of the blue. It should had come forth when he was looking through the eyes of others, not when Chris voiced out a very honest message of support that made Lucario feel happy with himself…

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… No, he thought to himself. Accepting Chris as a friend more than ever was just the right push in the right direction, as Lucario didn't feel guilty about it as much as before only because he confused friends for trainers. If accepting Chris as a true friend had unlocked the Aura Sphere, Lucario was bound to enjoy the next days ahead much better with a clear mind, at least until his eventual but mysterious return to his world of origin. The Riolu in his head agreed wholeheartedly to this notion, happily skipping and flailing his little arms around with glee.

Not noticing he rested his chin on Chris's head, Lucario closed his eyes and chuckled. "Wow. It is quite easy for me to please you… I'm glad my presence alone is enough," he muttered.

"It really helps you're so nice, too… Thanks."

Lucario growled silently with affection. "You're always welcome."

Well, I wonder how it'll go for both of them from here, because both will have to endure school life in their own ways, not to mention the holidays.

Please review, or else I will feel obligated to turn Lucario into a Muslim terrorist. (No offense to the real pacific Muslims out there. I know who NOT to point fingers to.)

A Day of School

Suddenly, taking me three days, I got the urge of writing and finishing this chapter… It's incredible how you get these sudden urges to write something.

This is a new year for all of us, but not quite so for these two, still stuck in the eventful past.

So why not proceed ahead and see what happens? I encourage all high school lovers to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 14: A Day of School

His enemies have gotten smarter since the last time he tackled one of them down in a very long exhausting battle meant to test his patience to the max. Now they knew the dangerous tactic of cooperation, as they had taken a rather intimidating formation that tried to outgrow him in size. Lucario watched sternly at his enemies staring right at his face, but they were very crafty, choosing not to move. Their formation was purely based on the art of intimidation alone. He could not falter against their devious tactic. He was a goliath if Chris's opinion held true. So then why was he getting so anxious against these enemies? He had the super strength to squash them all, but… what if they could counterattack with unseen force not even his aura could save him from? He clenched his aura fists hard, gritted his fangs hard, and glared down at the enemies. If they could play the game of intimidation, so then he. Lucario felt stronger knowing the limits of his strength on these enemies. His battle, though, took an unexpected turn when his enemies did not do anything, holding their position. When their determination to see their gigantic foe took a serious turn, it made Lucario finally growl mentally, sending them the warning message not to cross him ever… Narrowing his eyes tightly, he muttered the name of one of his enemies…

" ***Algebra I*** ," he muttered very silently with a hint of cold murder.

Then his wary eyes widened once the stack of four books were taken away from the table by an oblivious Chris putting them away into a nice little blue backpack on the floor. The battle was over. Lucario's enemies had been simply taken away by unexpected forces.

But was the war over, he wondered?

" **Hello?** "

Lucario shook his head quickly when he came to, oblivious himself of the conversation Chris had tried to tell him. The Aura Pokémon blinked quickly and then focused on the blank-looking human looking up at him. "S-sorry, what were you saying?" Lucario asked. "I-I got distracted by… sensing people walking by the house outside…"

"Oh…" Chris turned around and looked at the clock next to the entrance of the house. It was 6:20am. In twenty minutes, he had to leave for the bus stop to reach his new school, where classes would start at 7:30am. Reminding himself about the time, he turned back to Lucario. "As I was saying… Today is the first day of high school for me. Summer Vacations are truly officially over."

Lucario took note of the getup the human was wearing. Chris was dressed rather formally, with a blue school uniform complementing his blue jeans and brown shoes. The formal look was complemented by the hair gel that made his hair look shiny and combed to the right side. If his fogged memory - caused by his silent battle against the books - served well, the outfit would be discarded entirely and would only be used for formal school events, whatever those were to Lucario. "I see… I can't imagine this is happening for real."

Chris grimaced a bit. "Probably because you're used to having a trainer traveling everywhere with you. It can be a hard chance of pace having someone close to you… er…" he blushed a bit and tried to correct himself, "… someone you see so often leaving for a half of

the day…" The inner Riolu in the goliath's head was stretching his arms towards Chris. He did not want to see him go and leave him alone. "… We've talked a lot about this day coming, but are you sure you'll be okay by yourself?"

Lucario's inner thoughts were telling him no, that he wasn't going to do fine. He couldn't reveal to Chris he felt very lonely with that thought, and there was no way Lucario wanted to look needy. He had a spike chest that could seriously hurt opponents… and suddenly he realized that childish fact had come from his inner Riolu. Had he evolved too soon from his mysterious childhood self? He could only glare at his cheerful subconscious. "It will be fine," Lucario reassured. "It's not going to be much different without you around. I have my aura to go out into the world… in a way of speaking."

"Oh… Oh right, you have that," Chris noted. "It's all the more useful that you can use someone else's field of vision to look through their eyes and hear through their ears. It's always like you're out there without raising suspicion. So then, me not being here will be different to you."

" *No!* " the inner Riolu barked in protest. " *I want you here! I want you to spend time with me forever! I don't want to sense your aura! I want to have you with me!* "

"Exactly," Lucario told Chris, ignoring his inner thoughts. "I know the consequences of getting spotted by others in this world…" He glared at a nearby newspaper on a chair, with a small heading about the mysterious terrorist attempt on the city having shown no signs of appearing again. "… We unfortunately saw how that would play out."

"Yes…" Chris muttered, looking at the newspaper as well. "… But it'll be fine this time. I'll be going to school every day before the weekends. I won't be here at the house every morning, but we can still spend time together for the rest of the day unless I get a lot of homework to do."

" *Stupid school is taking you away from me!* " the inner Riolu complained with a pouting face.

"Homework?" Lucario questioned.

"Basically, adults teaching me new ways of learning new stuff in the world. It's like me trying to teach you stuff," Chris explained, which Lucario understood. Lucario had pegged Chris as an already-knowledgeable person, however. The Aura Pokémon couldn't believe how much better the human could get. He didn't need aura to read Lucario like an open - ***ugh*** - book. Now he had the chance to develop more otherworldly skills that could eclipse Lucario's aura? Were humans of the real world perfectly capable of taming his kind without raising their fists? "Maybe you can learn from me while I do homework…" That was a good opening for Lucario to stay on his feet against this formidable opponent…

" *No! He's not your enemy! He's your friend, ri!* " the inner Riolu complained to his older self.

"(Quiet, you,)" Lucario warned his inner self, noticing the Riolu had been more active too much in the morning. That was a bad sign… "That would be nice. I do like learning all these skills not related to combat," Lucario said.

"I wonder if any of the stuff I'll learn will be interesting to you," Chris said. "The only interest you could take is looking at pictures from many important landmarks in the world. The other stuff may not be as interesting… So anyway, you're saying you'll be okay without me during the mornings?"

"Yes, I'm sure," Lucario said.

" *Take me with you, riiiiii!* " the inner Riolu pleaded loudly.

"You'll do just fine. Like I said before, it's just a little time apart from each other every five days. It won't be that different," the teen said.

Half an hour later…

The current owner of the house had been gone for ten minutes now, but he wouldn't be back until a little later in the afternoon. Lucario had the whole house for himself, free to do whatever he wanted as long as he didn't cause collateral damage by accident. The Aura Pokémon sat idly on the living room's couch, hands resting on his sturdy knees, and staring at empty air while listening to the ticking sounds from the clock near the entrance…

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Holy Arceus, how did the utter silence of the house not cause him to feel at peace? And he was supposed to relish peace and solitude. He could just *not* get used to his new gifts. Lucario was so much used to spending time with the human that it was everything he knew was life. Without Chris around, the dullness of meditation was not even tempting. Lucario needed some chaos and company… and it had only been ten minutes so far. How would he manage the next ten minutes now that his patience had been put through the grinder? He unwillingly listened to his inner Riolu protesting his buried wants.

" *I want Chris here, riiii! It's so boring, and I feel so lonely! I need attention!* "

It hurt Lucario so much to listen to those buried thoughts. They were quick to the point: demanding him to just accept Chris much closer

and enjoy true life with him. Those thoughts quite clearly did not care much about his garbled past if they were so insistent on making him embrace the teen with open arms. But no, he was strong. He had to be strong in his mind and heart. Lucario did not need that interesting human around, no matter how many times his own thoughts betrayed him by tossing those unnecessary positive comments about that wonderful human. He could very much endure the silence of the house without outside interference!

So he listened to the clock going at it a little more… and then he gave up after the extra five seconds were over.

"I *can't* get used to this so easily…" he muttered to himself in an effort to pretend someone else was there. His aura heavily protested, sensing no presences in the house. "I must… I can use my aura to spy on someone else!" So he did just that by closing his eyes and never once glowing with aura. He really underestimated himself, not knowing that the normal Lucario was supposed to glow with aura when it was used. Anyone would be easily fooled into thinking he was looking at someone when in truth he could be looking at something else using his super developed sixth sense. Happy that he recalled his method to stay out of boredom, Lucario focused his aura on a random passerby outside…

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It was natural to get a little bored from taking the field of vision of one random male adult. The adult he picked wasn't thinking anything peculiar… Oh wait, maybe that other adult further up ahead had a story.

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No dice. The female adult he picked was almost the same. Lucario couldn't start to think the outside world was this dull now of all times… Then again, he thought he was probably jumping to conclusions. After all, there was an early mailman worker driving a truck with mail down the street. There should be some juicy stories in his head.

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Or not. Thoughts about delivering mail to streets Lucario wasn't familiar with didn't interest him, or knowing the current schedule. Desperately, Lucario saw a bird flying overhead to the north. Well, it was a living being. Therefore, it stood to reason he could use that bird as a vessel to spy its thoughts…

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Oh right, Lucario was lousy and a total stranger to chirping language. He only doomed himself listening nonstop to that infernal chirping sound. His aura senses desperately jumped down from the bird to another promising(?) male adult in a dirty alley…

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Just as the human with the strange thoughts, it was a real waste. Lucario could not understand the appeal this thing called "booze" was or why this human was… Oh wait, it was a homeless guy. Lucario felt some pity for this soul and he wandered away to forget about it. No need to get depressed while he was bored.

It was then he spotted a school bus and did not think twice about picking a random target inside the vehicle. One such target was a nice human teen looking out the window with a clear mind on his shoulders…

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… Wait a second. The aura from that human was frighteningly so familiar…

"So how was your Summer Vacation?" the other student sitting next to Chris asked.

Chris smiled and turned to the other student. "It was rather… normal, I guess," Chris told him. "(*NOT*,)" he thought, feeling a bit pressed into a corner. As to not raise suspicion, he asked, "How about you, Jordan?"

Ignoring the rest of that conversation, Lucario felt so sick in his head. He couldn't fathom how he ended up jumping from random human to random human and somehow ending up with Chris at the end of that long aura route. He dropped a lot of insults mentally, especially to that homeless guy thinking about booze. How does one even get results like this? The purpose of being alone in the house was to endure not being with Chris, and yet fate wanted to laugh at him! It didn't help how the inner Riolu was pals with fate because he was laughing and having a field day at the same time!

Back on focus, Lucario was speechless about how he found Chris out of randomly getting inside people's heads. There was absolutely no way, he thought, that he had been drawn to the teen. It had been such a gigantic coincidence that just… just happened, yes. The whole point about spending time alone was moot if Lucario couldn't stop thinking about Chris. Now that he had unwillingly invaded the teen's aura, it was all the harder for Lucario to just retreat… That was an ever worse sign. The option to retreat quickly was impossible somehow… He couldn't be serious about keeping that aura link until Chris came to the house! His own feelings were against him!

Shaking his head in an effort to severe the link, Lucario growled to himself… successfully severing the link.

Chris suddenly felt a chill running down his spine, which didn't go unnoticed by the other student Jordan. "Are you okay, man?" Jordan asked.

The teen mumbled a bit and asked, "… Ever felt like something wrong happened somewhere else while you were away from there, Jordan?"

"Like my dad getting drunk at a bar and saying harsh truths in a joking manner?"

"… Close, I guess," Chris said.

"… Eh, you get used to it," Jordan said with a shrug. Forgetting about that implication, Chris simply forced a small laugh and went on with the day. Talking to his friend helped him forget about worrying for the monster that he was hiding in his house.

And speaking of the monster hiding in Chris's house, Lucario was leaning back on the couch with an astonished look on his face. He covered his eyes with his left arm and sighed out loud. "What is going on with me…?" he breathed out. "I… I can't be getting too close to him… I don't feel needy… ! The plan was to avoid being close friends with him over my trainer!" he scolded himself, trying to

force his foggy memories out. Still, there was no progress on that, because he feared he had no past until he came out from his world… "No, no, no, NO! I have a past! I must! Why else do I even exist?!" he asked through gritted fangs.

" *To make Chris happy and be together with him, riiii!* "

Lucario pushed himself forward and grabbed his head at that comment from his inner self. He was not doubting the possibility he was going insane trying to fight the undeniable… so the most logical solution to keep himself from going insane is by calming himself down, listening to the infernal clock on the wall tempting him to blast it with an Aura Sphere. The stupid clock turned out to be the best distraction he could take, albeit logging his best weapon at it was very inviting… No, no, that was an awful idea. The clock was being helpful despite being an annoying little prick. Eventually, Lucario found peace of mind and leaned back on the couch, feeling much better with the world. Maybe now he could relax and forget about his aura trip…

Besides, he was sure Chris was going to have a nice school day without him around.

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Five minutes later, outside the house, a leaping shadow stealthily moved north across the neighborhood without being spotted, being too fast and landing on barred locations with each sky-high leap. The door leading to Chris's backyard was left open without a lock on, though nobody ever guessed that. The house was left alone for real…

A few hours later…

It was almost going to be recess time at L.A. High School. So far, Chris had a very normal day with no strange occurrences. To avoid any chances of being weirded out by people, the teen made a secret mission: he eavesdropped on students talking about their personal lives just to be sure none of them talked about the "terrorist attempt" from a few weeks ago. He luckily did not find people talking about it, despite there being a newspaper clipping on the teacher's desk with the same glaring heading on a small section. It looked like the event was not worth looking at anymore…

In the classroom of 30 students counting himself, Chris was listening closely to the algebra lecture from Mr. Coriel; the teacher's back turned to them as the 36-year old teacher dutifully talked about finding unknown values using given numbers on the textbook. Unlike how many detested any math subjects, Chris was good at them to a certain point that did not embarrass him with low grades. It sometimes worked against him to be knowledgeable in math, as he was pestered by others not so lucky in the teachings to hear his working version to decipher the strange math language. He knew it was going to happen all over again. He could not stop hearing the occasional grumbling sounds of his fellow companions. Those sounds felt nostalgic.

The teen was sitting on the third row from the front to the back rows, the large windows to the left from the classroom's first floor of three

overlooking the football field outside, which had a large area of trees that belonged to the school as part of a natural habitat to spice up the rural look. The area had been there even before Chris was born, although the school building progressively got more and more technological little by little every year, but the tree-filled area had always been the same, with the usual birds coming to rest or make their nests. Making sure he had enough time to take a quick peek, Chris looked outside to the field and let his eyes wander off to the trees overlooking the school building.

And then his eyes spotted something… *someone* jumping from the top of a bushy tree to another…

The moment had been very brief in itself, but Chris had a very good eyesight worthy of a gaming person. He recognized the overall wild appearance and the glaring blue color. Honestly speaking, he knew he hadn't seen things. Chris hadn't gone crazy not seeing that person for the last three hours of the day. By all accounts, what he had witnessed was not created by his mind… It was made more obvious by the random rustling of that one tree's branches. Whatever had landed in there, it was heavy enough to rustle a big half of the leaves. It wasn't even a windy day.

"(… Ooooooooooooooh *crap*,)" was all Chris thought at that moment.

"Mr. Garcia."

Chris blinked in realization and turned back to the blackboard, with Mr. Coriel focusing his attention on the one student he caught looking the other way from his lecture. Noticing the blank look on the teacher, Chris was very well trained in keeping an unfazed look. "Y-yes, Mr. Coriel?" Chris said.

"Do you perhaps know the answer to the current problem on the blackboard, or was there something outside that required more attention?" the teacher asked, making every student look at Chris, because it was totally unheard of to see even one not trying to look at a "problem" student messing up during a lecture.

The student simply took one look at the problem to find the value of x. "448," he simply answered.

"Well, now, that is…" Mr. Coriel trailed off when he glanced at the problem, "… correct…" he muttered in slight surprise.

Chris forced a small smile as the students started whispering some jokes about the teacher having unsuccessfully scolded an innocent listener. "Sorry, sir. You caught me at the exact moment I glanced outside for a little bit. I was listening closely to your lecture the whole time," he said.

"I… I see… Giving the answer like that proves it, and the problem on the blackboard is not even on the textbook… Well done," the teacher blankly said, turning back to the blackboard and pretending the little incident didn't happen.

"(I may daydream now and then, but my ears and eyes always stay alert… Phew…)" Chris thought to himself as the whispers died down. To his chagrin, he would be asked later in the following days how to solve the math problems of the class after making such a strong impression. Some of those students knew the full truth on how long he had been staring out, but it took them by surprise he had figured out one problem like that.

Back on more important matters, the teen glanced back outside at the suspicious tree and made a mental note about going out there during recess to confirm his doubts… He couldn't believe for real the deal had been broken so early…

An hour later…

It was recess time now, with every student in the campus going on and about without much of a care in the world, except for one concerned Chris walking towards the trees on the back of the school. With a tray carrying an apple, two small meat burritos fresh out of the oven, and a bottle of chocolate milk, he was not about to skip lunch by wasting time on something he thought shouldn't be possible. The

food he carried also served another purpose, especially the meat burritos with the enticing smell wafting in the air. Remembering which tree the teen had looked at, the teen stopped right under the bushy branches - as it was very hard to see anything hiding in there - looked around to check for any onlookers, and started talking to the "empty" air there above his head.

"Is someone hiding in there?" Chris asked the leaves.

The leaves did not answer.

Embarrassed about the idea he had, Chris picked one meat burrito and raised it to the air to let its smell go up through the leaves.

…

…

…

A stomach growled quite loudly in the leaves, despite its owner having a thin-looking body that was used to eating too much delicious meat many days in the close past. That smell from the burrito was just too good to ignore.

"Oh, for god's sake!" Chris complained loudly, putting the burrito down on the tray. "Lucario, I know you are in there! I'm so used to listening to that stomach of yours echoing whenever I cook you a steak!"

Chris overheard a grunting sound coming from the leaves. From a small opening hidden from outsiders that was only visible from below the branches, a head poked out upside-down and looked down at him. "…" Lucario said nothing, but his worried face kind of said a lot.

"I knew it!" Chris said, looking disappointed. "It WAS you!"

"Damn…" Lucario muttered. "I thought for sure you wouldn't find out I was hiding here… Did you sense me?"

"No, I saw you clearly with my own eyes from the classroom in front of the football field. You were jumping from tree to tree until I saw this tree's leaves rustling a little too much!"

"Yes… I got my foot stuck on a branch while I tried to reposition myself."

"T-that's not the issue here. What are you even doing here?!" Chris asked, quickly glancing around to check for eavesdroppers. "I thought you said you were going to stay at the house until I went back home! We agreed to this days ago, even!"

The perfect chance to drive himself away from Chris had somehow shown itself. If he argued against Chris, Lucario would feel better…

"I'm really worried someone might see you and take you away to some weird place!" Chris added.

And now the perfect chance had been dashed to the ground by that sentence hinting kindness for Lucario's welfare. It was now hard to argue back. "… I…" Lucario trailed off. His inner self demanded him to tell the truth. "… I… I got bored…"

"… What?" Chris's face fell.

"I… got too bored being alone at the house…" Lucario admitted. "… It was very much unbearable. Using my aura to see the outside world didn't do anything to fix that, and somehow… I found myself sneaking around the city all the way to your school…"

"…" Chris grimaced in thought. "… So is it not a coincidence I found you here of all places outside the house?"

"… The truth is… I… I… I can't… stand the thought of not seeing you around…" Lucario screamed mentally. That had been a huge glaring flag right there. Staring down at Chris's surprised expression, Lucario worked hard to gulp down his breath upside-down. "… I am

so used to… to spending time with you that… that otherwise it gets too boring for me…"

"… Oh," Chris muttered quietly. "… Maybe you're just too used to having people around you that it's very weird to be alone…"

"… I guess," Lucario said in defeat.

"(What he did today is just wrong… Yet… that is so sweet of him,)" Chris thought fondly. "(Of all places he could've gone, he went to the same place I am at. I can't get angry at him… But even if this looks like the right time to strengthen that connection with him, doing it outside the house is too risky…) Well…" Chris smiled honestly at the confused Lucario, "… thank you for dropping by."

Lucario's eyes widened in pure shock at the sudden thanking gesture, though his cheeks were already blushing. He then listened to his inner self barking happily in glee at the words.

"… B-but just so you know, I hope this is the last time you do something like this so suddenly," Chris said, readjusting to reality and trying to hide his blushing face. "Sadly, this world may never be ready to have you walking around… except maybe in a desolated place or my future children."

The Aura Pokémon didn't hesitate in using that comment to put his head back in the game. Embarrassment wasn't going to let him lose. "I-I agree… I'm ashamed in myself giving in so easily to boredom," Lucario said.

Chris sighed. "I know you won't do this again… You will just have to use your aura to go outside," he said. "Even if it was boring for you the first time around… You could still do other stuff, you know. You could watch TV or even workout."

Lucario grumbled. "I don't know how I didn't think about using those other options. I must be creative without causing trouble to you or your house," he said.

"Thanks. It's good to know you care about my feelings," Chris said happy.

"Oh, and… speaking of feelings… I wasn't entirely following you around," Lucario admitted.

"What?" Chris looked up.

"If I had been, I would've predicted you would find me hiding in here. I have a very good aura skill, as you've told me," he said. "I just got very curious about every person in the building, spying on their feelings and thoughts to entertain me a little."

"… That sounds extremely rude, you know," Chris commented.

"I-I couldn't help it, as I've said before," Lucario shakily said. "I've found out so many things in their minds, Chris. It was very… graphic."

"… Graphic?" Chris had a bad feeling.

A minute later…

Chris's ears were covered in disgust once he had heard from Lucario about the… *very* scandalous thoughts he listened to in the heads of many students. "… and I'm very concerned about why so many of them want to do stuff on their beds while no one is looking," Lucario finished. "I had a hunch it would be a little too much to listen to the full version of those stories, so that is why I did not pry further. But Chris, why are they so fixated in thinking almost the same thing? It's so incredible so many think the same. Why don't they think differently, like the two of us?"

The teen uncovered his ears and tried so hard to forget. "L-Lucario… I beg of you, do *not* ever get into their heads again in your life," Chris begged a confused Lucario. "Oh holy crap, I'll never see Jordan the same because of what you found out!"

"W-what is so bad about what I found out?" Lucario stammered.

"F-forget it. I'll just say that… it's very, very… very intimate stuff no one else should even know. Don't you know a mind is a terrible thing to read?"

"…"

"… Since it looks like you don't get it at all unless I flat-out say it," Chris sighed, "you listened to partial extremely erotic thoughts for humans."

"…" Lucario's mouth hung open upside-down, his crimson eyes shrunken in utter horror. His inner Riolu self had received such a super effective mind attack that he had fainted out of sheer bewilderment.

"NOW you understand?"

Lucario shook his head and nodded. "Y-y-y-y-y-yes, I-I-I see now. I-I mean, I-I understand now," he stuttered, trying to erase his findings of the day in the last two hours. "H-humans really don't look like they appear to look…"

"That's why you're not supposed to read their minds! It's rude when you want to do it, but it's risky because it can still scar you for life!" Chris warned. "… My mind is not like them, okay? Don't feel the need to inspect it. I really am pure of mind."

"S-so am I," Lucario agreed. "Fine. I won't ever dwell into another random mind. I will only rely on my aura to sense emotions. Emotions don't give out rampant thoughts and only ever allow me to see if it's safe to peek into their minds… A very happy person can be thinking some seriou-"

"AHEM!"

"R-right, let's not continue talking about it any longer."

Sighing in relief, the teen turned back to the direction of the school and the other unaware students. "Recess is not yet over. I'm going to have to go back so nobody starts thinking I'm talking to trees alone…" He looked down at his food tray and looked back up at Lucario. He walked right below him and held out for him a meat burrito. "Also, eat this. It should hold you over for meal time when I go back to the house. I know you didn't eat enough breakfast this morning."

Lucario quickly stretched out his hand to the offering and pulled it back with him. He did not wait to readjust himself in a straight sitting position, his mouth already devouring the exquisite taste of a warm tortilla wrapped around steamy meat with potato pieces inside. It was good to be alive.

Listening to Lucario's loud munching sounds, Chris chuckled. "You don't need to tell me you are enjoying it," he said. "I'll make sure to make my own version when I go back. Until then… please try to head back without getting spotted once recess is over and everyone is back inside the building, okay?"

"Yoos," Lucario said, mouth full.

"Good…" Concerned about the Aura Pokémon, Chris started heading back to the building. It was going to be hard to forget how over 60% of the people he talked to didn't look as pure as they seemed at first glance… which worked for his favor, as he completely forgot about the wandering Lucario in the campus.

The day went by as planned…

Early afternoon…

Walking down the pavement and heading south to his house, Chris remembered everything that happened before he had resumed classes. He prayed to dear god that Lucario was back at the house without causing suspicion around the city, or else their lives would change drastically for worse. As his thoughts created a messy

hurricane in his head, the teen came face-to-face with his house across the straight tiled path to it. He took a moment to look to the sides of the street as if to give Lucario more time to barge back inside until he went on ahead and opened the door to enter inside…

"Welcome back," Lucario said from the nearby couch, having sensed Chris's presence since he sensed his aura leave the school.

"Oh, you're really here…" Chris said, closing the door from behind and tossing his backpack aside. He sighed and went over to the creature. "When did you get back here?"

"Just as you said, after recess was over," Lucario affirmed. "I had to be more careful. There were more people outdoors than in the morning… and I hardly had any control of my senses back then when I was bored."

Chris nodded. "Hopefully nobody spotted you…"

"No one did. I had my aura senses on high alert for any sudden spike of emotions. Specifically, emotions of high surprise. It would be obvious if someone else other than you would get really surprised seeing me around," Lucario pointed out.

The human felt much better. Lucario really was the Aura Pokémon. "That's much better to hear… Again, don't try going out, anyway," he added. "You may be the best ninja of the whole world, but eventually, someone is bound to spot you despite being too skilled."

"I know, Chris…" Lucario looked down in shame. "I must think of countermeasures to avoid the temptation of leaving the house while you're away."

"I'll help you out with that," Chris said. "We're in this together, you know."

Lucario stared at Chris for a small while until he smiled a bit. "We are, aren't we?"

Despite Lucario's escapades that day, he had fun sneaking out of the house and getting a controversial chance of wandering outside the house at his leisure. That experience had turned into a very tempting thought that would remain with him for a long time… or forever. He had to endure the "pain" of seeing Chris leave the house every morning, by which then the pain would turn into temptation to follow him as if he was his trainer. And again, Lucario would deny the thought as many times as he needed to stay focused. Regardless of what happened that was related to Chris's school days, Lucario would try to stay strong in the days to come…

The mighty creature was concerned about his inner self. It had become more active in a single day so suddenly, and its buried thoughts were coming to light almost completely in his own words. As much as he hated to admit it, Lucario was fighting himself. He had to stay on his guard at whatever would tempt his inner Riolu to bark out a piece of truth Lucario did not want Chris to hear to get "crazy" ideas of their relationship. Lucario could not be a jerk to the human. It just wasn't in his attitude anymore… or ever. He liked Chris a lot… and he had to keep it at that in hopes of finding out about his foggy past life in his world…

Enduring the real world was the only action Lucario could take on for the time being.

Late afternoon, he joined Chris with his homework. He sensed Chris's disappointment in having to do homework the first day of school, though Lucario took it as an exciting opportunity to learn what a normal student did during class time. Although he didn't consider being a scholar at all, Lucario was very curious about school homework. So then, at Chris's room, the human was sitting in front of the desk to the left of the TV, with an open book and a notebook on the furniture. Lucario sat down on the floor next to Chris, the first having no need to go for a chair as he was tall enough to reach the desk's full height at chest level. The curious Aura Pokémon looked down at the open book…

He was dismayed to learn the infernal English letters had fearsome allies: the demonic combination of numbers known as fractions, cousins to divisions and nephews to exponents. With his inner self joining in his own thoughts, a murderous growl escaped Lucario's gritted fangs while hoping his fierce glare could burn the pages taunting him, scaring and confusing Chris. There was too much for Lucario to see in the world, the teen thought…

For those of you who remembered the original chapter yeeeeeeears ago, this one is radically different and less silly, opting for a more realistic take of things. I didn't really want to get too much description for the school setting or Jordan, who is not going to be a recurring character with importance to the plot. Ultimately, this story is about the two main characters and will end with both of them. Adding another human may make this story less about Pokémon… so no implied love interests for Chris either. Bros(?) before hoes.

I admit there was a little too much comedy in this chapter instead of some more drama… What do you mean you don't mind? Oh, okay. I'll take your word for it.

However, the drama will continue on in the next chapters as these two explore some more themes until… that decision day comes and they have to do the right thing. Who will fall down first?

I encourage everyone to review, or else this English-speaking Lucario will go to war against the katakana characters of the Japanese language.

A Birthday

This chapter was originally meant to be done by the time of my birthday the last day of September. Unfortunately, it wasn't meant to be, but I managed to finish it anyway. That is good, right?

WARNING: This chapter contains a rather strong theme that may be uncomfortable to readers. I'm not going to mention what it is here as it would spoil things further down the page, so if you have weak constitution to this, skip this chapter and wait for the next one.

… You're still here? Okay. Maybe you can stomach it. Don't say I didn't warn you, though.

I encourage all birthday boys and girls to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 15: A Birthday

Weeks have passed since the little school incident for Lucario. It had been almost so long since he learned to be patient and wait for his human partner to come back home. Boredom was the biggest obstacle for the Aura Pokemon to defeat, but he had learned to conquer it by indulging himself in other activities in the house.

Namely, his long endurance to defeat the accursed books that mocked him with long sentences. Not today, he thought as he was sitting alone in the living room, ready a copy of some tale about bean trees and a young woman who was given a baby after she decided to live far away from her boring hometown. Initially, Lucario had just taken that book from one of many Chris showed him just to prove his ego was strong enough to topple them (the Algebra I book turned out to be a truly formidable opponent he was not ready to defeat any time soon… whose bright idea was it to mix words with numbers and all those weird symbols?) but overtime he learned to appreciate that

maybe some books were not as boring as they seemed at first glance…

Well, it helped Chris told Lucario the books he had read before were informative books, unlike the one he was reading that did have a story to tell. Though the story was not real, it did seem like it happened. Lucario had indirectly learned how to appreciate the descriptive details of a story book, and he almost never realized how enthralled he was into reading those kinds of books.

It was not just books that helped him distract himself from the many days Chris was absent during five straight mornings. Lucario found some other mundane hobbies with mixed results: watching TV for his newfound thirst to see some action in any channels, indoor gardening to water the plants, the usual housekeeping duty of making sure nothing… or no one would break into the house unguarded, bird watching from the windows, an hour or two of meditation, and the usual thoughts of going back home soon…

The last one always drove Lucario homesick, and that feeling was reinforced more and more whenever he was left alone to look after the house. It wasn't doing it for him to relish in his new life away from the one he didn't know much about… The homesick feeling was fervently fought back by that Riolu of the mind who apparently knew better than trying to accept departure. That little puppy was a real fighter, trying hard every day to convince Lucario to accept the situation he was in and be more openly happy around his human partner. Lucario nevertheless kept at it for many times that was brought up. Somehow, he knew the fight was futile to win for his favor… but he did not want to admit it.

The present time didn't call for such negative thoughts, though. Lucario was too much focused on his book to even notice the passage of time. When he finally had noticed, Chris was already home, showing the usual high spirits of a nice school day gone by. He was used to finding Lucario sitting alone in the living room, sometimes believing he was waiting for the human to arrive to make the day better for him… And really, Lucario was in dire need for

attention given his trapped world dilemma. "Greetings," Lucario said. "How was school today?"

"Same old," Chris said, tossing his backpack aside. "Same eventless days, same quiet classes after the teacher has yelled everyone to stop yelling, same amount of homework…" The last one stung Lucario a bit. It meant the teen wouldn't pay him much attention. It had happened often during weekdays and sometimes Chris would even leave the house to do a group project with other people the Aura Pokémon wasn't allowed to meet because… of obvious reasons. Chris had avoided inviting people over precisely because of Lucario being there. The risk was too big to take…

Wait, no. Of course Lucario wasn't *much* sad about his friend being around him. Why anyone would think he was sad a lot? There wasn't anything about Chris that would make Lucario crazy for him.

"Are you going to do your homework early?" Lucario asked.

"Later on the day. I'm sure you're a little hungry for something, so I'll prepare some steaks for both of us."

Meat meat meat meat meat meat meat meat meat meat meat meat mea-

"I'll gladly take you on that offer," Lucario replied, his mind clearing out from that extremely appetizing word echoing multiple times. After Chris nodded and walked away, Lucario grimaced to himself and hit his forehead with the open book. His carnivore side was another issue of his inner subconscious he had to overcome… but not even the Riolu was safe from wagging his tail about the thought of eating cooked meat. No way was he going to ally with that tyke. Again, too much of a risk.

Time went by as Lucario anxiously waited for the meal only to finally be able to indulge in that succulent taste. Because Chris knew better than to interrupt the overly happy warrior eating his meal (as Lucario was unable to notice how his tail wagged through the chair), he

wanted to bring up an important event. Not even ten minutes passed for the meat to stay alive in one piece… or even the bone it used to have as well.

Shrugging that thought away as he collected the plates, Chris knew it was safe to talk to Lucario, who was leaning on his chair with a satisfied smile and ignoring the creaking sound his hard steel back was causing on his seat slightly bending. "I did tell you my birthday is in a few days, right?" Chris asked.

Lucario snapped back from his meat fantasies and opened his eyes. "Your… birthday?" he said, pointing out indirectly with the silence afterwards that he wasn't informed of that day. "N-no, you never said anything about a birthday…"

"Oh. Then I'm telling you now," Chris said. The aura in him seemed to be brightening up like a flame being given more fuel. "My relatives like to gather the whole family for a big party. Sometimes, they like doing it the house of the birthday person, but this time I objected to it because of… well…" He gave Lucario one long look.

"…" Lucario felt guilty, knowing what the reason was. "… I'm sorry."

"N-no, it's not your fault. If anything, this means I care so much about you to keep others from finding out you're here, even if it's my birthday," Chris said. While his cheeks blushed as he looked away in embarrassment, Lucario similarly did the same. Deep down, feeling regretful was replaced by feeling… very happy. Very happy, in fact, the Riolu in his mind couldn't stop wagging his bushy tail. "… S-so, ahem, yes. I really wish you could be there with the family, but…"

"It's fine," Lucario said, forcing a smile. "I could simply get inside your aura and just wander around with you…" He felt like something stung him when he said those words. That was getting too intimate with the human! "T-that would be rude of me, though. You wouldn't tell I'm in your aura if I didn't warn you first."

"It stinks if you're not there physically, but we can't do anything about it," Chris lamented. "… Still, I'm planning to spend some time with you during that day, too. You… you'd like to be with me that day, right?"

Of course! Lucario's inner thoughts rang out strongly. He did not want to choose that obvious option if it meant growing even closer to the human more than his trainer. But saying no now of all times was like killing Chris… There was a way to make it sound like he wanted to without raising Chris's hopes too much. Chuckling, he said, "It's not like I know anyone else, do I?"

Chris chuckled back. "Oh right. I wished you had other options…"

"You're the default one that I like a lot. I doubt having other options would've been better than yours," Lucario happily said without missing a single beat. Inside his head, his face was shown with an extremely stone-faced look of hopelessness. In the background, the Riolu skipped about giggling. "(***ARCEUS FREAKING DAMMIT! THAT WAS TOO NICE!***)"

"O-oh, that's… sweet of you," Chris said, almost under his breath. However, instead of thinking Lucario was being nice because he wanted to, Chris thought differently. "(I think that steak I cooked put him in a too happy mood… Just my luck… Keep this up anyway, you. This is so much better than having him moping around…) O-oh! And hear this: my parents are coming to celebrate!"

… Wow. That spike in Chris's aura was contagious to be so close to, Lucario thought. The teen's aura was going off the charts with all those positive vibes, and Lucario felt at ease being nearby. Meditating with that aura close by didn't sound like a bad ide- "(I-I-I mean, focus, you imbecile!)" Lucario scolded himself. "Your parents are coming over?"

"Yes!" Chris said. Not even reading his aura would be necessary to tell he was happy. He was smiling ear to ear. "It's been like more

than a year since they last visited. I feel so lucky they managed to make room to spend time with the family… and me," he said.

Wait. More than a year? Thinking logically, Lucario didn't want to ask if they hadn't attended his previous birthday at all… Staring at those calendars to get familiar with the passage of time in his alone time wasn't such a waste.

"I may be lucky if I even have a video conversation with both of them," Chris said. "We've only had like 15 of those across the whole year, and they barely last more than ten minutes… Their schedule as IT workers is pretty tight."

Two letters? "IT?" Lucario wondered.

"Information Technology. Basically, they're computer technicians," Chris explained. "They graduated with high honors at university level. Not to brag or anything, but they had some absurdly high grades that even more well-known institutions tried to wrestle them away from the local university in this city."

That was new to Lucario. He knew so little about Chris's parents besides the pictures that were around on the walls or on tables in the house. Recalling those pictures, Chris's father was a tall man with black hair and light brown skin color, while Chris's mother was a slightly shorter woman with long blond hair. It seemed Chris had borrowed his father's looks the most, but he had the same brown eyes and facial design as his mother, except of course his looked a bit more masculine.

"And it shows," Chris continued. "They're so good at it that they have made themselves a name in the world of computer science as freelancers. They know the deepest reaches of the internet like the back of their hands…" That explained why there was a room full of computer equipment Lucario had wandered to while Chris was in school one day. "A job like theirs gives them a lot of money, but it still doesn't compare to money celebrities earn. But the flow is constant… and that means their schedule is pretty tight. They

receive commissions from companies outside the city that they're often traveling abroad. It's crazy."

"… But… can't they come visit you a few times?" Lucario asked curiously.

"They've tried many times…" the teen said with some lament in his voice. "The problem is that they are very much organized with every job that needs to be done for whatever corporation has hired them. They also occupy themselves with video conferences and very long messages to CEOs. They make it look easy, but I've seen a few snippets of their work. It's… extremely daunting. I blame how other rival companies latch onto them the moment they have time to breath."

Lucario frowned, and then something occurred to him… What about his parents? Surely Chris didn't know anything about them either. Unlike how the aura warrior tried to force out the memories of his trainer, he came at a blank trying to make heads or tails from his parents. If he was told he was too big and strong for a normal Lucario, did that mean his parents were gods or something? Maybe, but Lucario felt sad there was a void there that didn't say much about his parents… and he wasn't as melancholic about them than his missing trainer.

"At least email conversations are what keep us connected," Chris sighed. "Chat rooms just don't give the time. Here between us… they're extreme workaholics. They love spending every ounce of energy they have into what they like to do."

"They must be very energetic people," Lucario remarked.

"Yes, they are. I just wish that same kind of energy could be used on me…"

… **...** ….

Lucario's senses had suddenly acted up. Mentally, he was startled by the reaction. Close by, an aura had turned sour in a blink of an eye and said feeling was so strong that his senses, which weren't focusing on anything, were drawn to the negative sensations. From what he could gather, the emotions in that aura had conflicted so much that it was like a flash of red that blinded him for half a second… Did those emotions come from…?

"But then again, I wouldn't live in this house and basically have a college fund at the ready if it weren't for them," Chris said, indirectly snapping Lucario from his brief brainstorming. "They like me. That can't be denied."

… **...** ….

There they were again, and the source had been located…

… No, Lucario was not seeing things. Now that he had been alerted and sharpened his aura senses, the negative emotions had absolutely come from Chris himself. All the time he had spent with the human, Lucario had never sensed such strong flashes of negative emotions. Chris's aura was so very pleasant to be close to that Lucario would never dare try to make it go sour (not that he would ever admit to Chris his aura was contagious in a good way), but it concerned him a lot an aura could just… flash so negatively even if Chris looked averagely happy reminiscing about his traveling parents.

Wait. Those flashes were surely related to his parents, Lucario thought. Wouldn't that mean Chris loathed the idea of them not being there for him… that he would be so outraged for his aura to flash so strongly? It was so scary for Lucario to see the lively human break like that in the supernatural level. Though Lucario gained a lot of curiosity about those emotions running wild like that, he was not going to take the risk and probe into the matter any further. Lucario was no psychologist, unfortunately, but he would embrace having such potent skill since he could see and sense auras; the living manifestations of life and emotions.

The Riolu barked sadly. He did want to help Chris so badly.

"So I'll make the best out of them visiting me for my birthday," Chris said happily. At least his aura was brimming with positive vibes as usual. "I've spoiled them about all the stuff that's happened, but I've made sure to leave details out of the summaries I've sent them in case they ever showed up personally and we could talk for much longer. Heh heh."

Lucario smiled, his aura senses keeping a very close watch on the teen's aura. "You also have other people celebrating your birthday. This will be better for you," he said.

"The whole family always gathers en masse when a birthday comes up. It gives them an excuse to go all out," Chris said. "Many of my relatives live here in the city, and they can be pretty loud during family gatherings that you could probably hear them laugh in five miles."

"Birthdays are surely fun," Lucario said. He looked down to the floor and wondered something else. "… I don't know when my birthday is, though, and… I don't know any of my relatives…" he muttered.

Chris overheard him. "Oh, Lucario… I-I forgot you'd think about your own birthday and any of your relatives," he said. "I also forgot you're not in your world to find out any of this…"

"… It's fine," Lucario said, shaking his head and forcing a smile. "Not that there any good gifts I could get."

The teen mumbled for a bit. "Well, I could think of a few things that you would like," Chris said.

"Wait, you do?"

"Oh, but I'd rather keep it as a secret," Chris said. The Riolu pouted. "You already made me get lost in thought thinking about when your

birthday is and what you'd like as a gift. Maybe I could find out somehow when…"

Lucario was happy Chris showed enthusiasm to help him find that, but what could he find out if Lucario didn't have any leads? He was not hopeful something could appear. "… Well… if you can find out, tell me," Lucario said. "I'd like to get concrete proof of the day I was born. I'm not sure how old I am."

"(Give it or take, you're surely like… one year old,)" Chris thought, perturbed at the thought his house guest was a giant at such young age. Lucario biology was weird. "There's so much for me to look forward to, but I'll help you out. I will never stop giving you attention so we don't feel alone."

The aura warrior did not need to use his aura or read Chris's mind. He was awfully honest about those words. All those days they were together were solid evidence that could not be ignored so easily, though Lucario's futile attempts to distance himself from Chris to keep his trainer as his first best friend never worked. If only that Riolu could just stop jumping merrily around…

Though, despite all these great things to look forward to, Lucario's aura senses could not stop picking up those extreme spikes of negative emotions coming from Chris as the days went by. Ever since he first noticed them, those feelings would appear so suddenly with no warning, surely because the teen would think about his parents and their lack of history with him. It nagged Lucario too much, but he didn't want to pry. What if he could set off a ticking bomb by accident just trying to help a bit? He cared too much about Chris's feelings (not because he really did like Chris, oh no) than trying to wreck them. The Riolu in his head wanted to lend a helping paw all the same, barking loudly when the flashes would appear. And if he was right, Lucario could tell the flashes became more and more frequent with each day that passed. He did think about a few possibilities as to why they appeared so often, but some of them didn't make sense in the great picture. He was told Chris parents would come after a long while, so why even have such strong

emotions appear? Did Chris fear another long period of absence from them to bring those sour emotions? If that one was true, Lucario was not sure how he would try to help him out… Saying "I'm here for you" seemed like the perfect line, though it sounded *way* too nice. Maybe… just maybe, the answer for that would show up by itself?

Before Lucario knew it, days went by quickly, and Chris's birthday was just two days away. From what he got from Chris, the family gathering was going to be big since no other relative had a birthday close to the teen's, contributing to Chris's fact about how they liked going wild with an excuse to do so. He was alarmed to hear all those dishes involving meat. What were those tacos he heard so much about? And those weird dishes called chimichangas? In fact, what were even those words? And why couldn't his stomach stop rumbling the more he tried to figure out why meat was involved in them? Overhearing Chris talk in a strange language he never heard about until now came as a real shocking surprise.

So that same day during the afternoon, Lucario's curiosity got the better of him and he finally asked what the deal was with all those terms coming out with guns blazing. No, he totally did not want to know just to get to the bottom of the mystery related to meat to see if it would make the meat even more appetizing. And no, the Riolu in his head was not wearing a napkin on his neck, holding a fork and a butter knife.

"Oh… Oh…" Chris muttered, the two of them in the living room of the second floor, resting on the couches to watch the rain pouring outside. "I'm of mixed blood."

"Mixed blood?" Lucario repeated.

"My mom and her relatives are not from this country," Chris said. "Well, they were born here, but they belong to another race of people. In other words, they - and me - have Hispanic blood in our veins, so that means they all originated from Mexico, which is several miles down south from this city. Only my father's side is

Native American." He touched his skin and showed his hand to Lucario. "It's hard to tell for you, but my light brown skin isn't supposed to be that common further inside the United States. It's pretty easy to tell races apart with first looks."

"So… is it like how Hitmonchan are different from my race?" Lucario wondered.

"Uh, well, I wouldn't put it that way because you two are completely different species," Chris said. "In your case, I'd imagine a… green Lucario that was born in dense forests… or something like that."

"Oh."

"My mother's relatives are very much in touch with their family roots," Chris said. "When we get together, it's like a piece of Mexico was brought over and there are two languages being spoken all over the place because we all know how to talk Spanish. My dad's relatives barely know or understand the language, but my dad is the only one who can talk Spanish fluently thanks to my mom being his teacher."

That explained those strange books separated from the others Lucario found in other drawers. He would growl in annoyance trying to understand anything those weird words were, though he did not like being defeated by those groups of letters after conquering the others.

"It's a big mess, but it's so fun," Chris said. "And thanks to my mom's side, my food palette can't never get enough of all the dishes we get to eat. This aunt I have goes out of her way to import the richest products all the way from our connections from Mexico. I'm sure you're so going to enjoy all the plates I'll bring over from the party." Oh, finally. He was getting to the good stuff, Lucario subconsciously thought. "I'll teach you how to talk Spanish once I'm sure you have completely understood how to read English. Think of all the stuff you can learn!" Oh Arceus, why. Why did he change topics so fast to something so incredibly stale?

"I look forward to that," Lucario said. Sadly, he meant the food, but Chris thought he meant learning Spanish.

"You'll have a blast learning something else. I don't want you to make faces whenever I use Spanish or you use your aura to hear through my ears all of those funny-sounding words." Dammit, he thought I talked about the language, Lucario thought. The Riolu was similarly depressed.

A booming sound startled them both, making them look outside at the heavy rain. It had been raining too much since the morning, with thunders crackling the air, with their heavy sounds quaking the windows of the house. The storm had been too strong that classes were cancelled for Chris's school. "Strong weather we have today," Lucario said.

Listening to those thunders made Chris remember that day Lucario dropped in his room. "It better not rain this badly during my birthday," Chris said. "We have a roof above our heads, but everyone has to have a safe trip driving there, including my parents. They're supposed to come tomorrow here first before my birthday… You remember our strategy, right?"

Lucario sighed. He was not looking forward to his tailored-strategy. "Hide in the attic, or inside your closet," he said. "And when the time is right when they're not around, come out and stretch to get fresh air."

"Yes. Because otherwise, I don't doubt the whole world will get on your case and your freedom will be over…"

That consequence was enough to convince Lucario to go with the plan. If the pressure of letting Chris's parents know he had been housing a supernatural being was not going to break him, then the multiple national guards of the world will.

His thoughts abruptly stopped when the nearby phone rang. "I've been waiting for my parents to call today. They were going to let me

know they're setting up to travel back from Minnesota," Chris said as he got up from the couch and went over to answer the call. "Hello?" He brightened up when he heard his dad reply back. "Oh, hi, dad! It's so nice to hear from you. How are you and my mom doing?" He glanced at Lucario and saw him smiling. Chris's aura was getting strong positive vibes just listening to his dad's voice. "Yes, I'm doing well. It's raining pretty hard today, but I'm fine at home. I'm not planning to step out while it's this hard. But never mind that, how are your preparations going to come back here?"

There was a small pause that eventually turned a little long, confusing Lucario. He noticed Chris was staring into thin air as he listened to his dad talking on the phone.

… Then the contagious aura full of sickeningly good emotions died out immediately with no warning, replaced with a normal aura that pointed out Chris was alive but not displaying any emotions at all. Despite this, Chris's face had a still smile on it, but it frightened Lucario that his optimist had disappeared completely…

"… And… can't you two cancel it?" Chris asked.

Another long pause followed, with Chris's father responding that odd question. Chris was not turning to look at Lucario, but Lucario himself kept a check on his life's essence for any hidden reactions. To his horror, the aura warrior sensed a small flicker of negative aura manifesting… and growing larger.

"But… but you two promised you'd be here for my birthday!" Chris said, not noticing he raised his voice a bit. "You even planned ahead of time to make time for the family! It's not just about me here! Everyone in the family wanted to see you both for the event! Y-you can't say no after we've come this far!"

This was not going well and would not get well, Lucario thought as he sensed that dangerous set of emotions welling up in Chris's aura. Emotions of sadness, disappointment, and solitude were growing ever larger than they were consuming the soul entirely. This was not

good! The Riolu in his head was flailing his arms, alarmed at sensing those negative vibes.

"S-so when are you going to come, then?" Chris asked, tears starting to roll down his eyes. "… You're not sure?! How can't you be sure?!" he scolded loudly, and Lucario heard his dad sounding alarmed while trying to calm his so down. "I knew it… I knew this was all too good to be true! Every chance I get to see you two, something else comes up that's more important to attend to! It's like you two are ALWAYS pretending you don't have a son around to tie you down to a single place!"

Lucario was at a loss of words trying to understand and find out what the best approach would be to calm Chris down. Anger was now taking a position next to the other emotions, and all of them nagged at him so badly that he wanted to end them all immediately. None of this was going to end well, he told himself. I wanna help Chris! His inner Riolu cried loudly… and so did he.

"FINE! I don't need both of you here! I'm *very* used to it anyway!"

And the phone was slammed down, with only the sound of the rain outside keeping the house from falling into dead silence.

Lucario could do nothing but stare at Chris, frozen right there with his hand still resting on the phone he gripped hard. The teen's aura was a mess of negative emotions constantly swirling and trying to overcome each other to see which one would win over his mental state, with no signs of a positive emotion trying to fight them off. Seeing Chris in such state broke Lucario apart more than he could think, greatly ignoring the fact how close he was with the human. What would be the right thing to do now?

It was then something else in Chris's aura pulsated with thoughts so strong Lucario couldn't help overhear bits so strong it would be impossible to ignore. "*… Knife… again… should have done that… before… Right on my chest… it will all… over soon… Why… it matters to live…? I have to… I have to… !* "

What the he-?!

Lucario was no idiot and realized what was going to happen if he didn't interrupt. Chris's eyes were frozen but his feet were acting on their own, taking a sudden running start towards the stairs to the first floor. However, Lucario was having none of it, so he sprang into action from the couch at the same time and wasted not a single second to embrace the broken down teen to keep him from running off (while minding the chest spike from puncturing the teen). Being so close to that negative aura lashing out wildly because of his interference hurt Lucario more than Chris's loud protests of letting him go, but in the fight of wills, Lucario's will was stronger. Or at least his Herculean strength was, as Chris had no hopes of even budging him once. "LET ME GO!" Chris demanded, angry and sad with tears flying out from his swinging head that was soon restrained by Lucario leaning his neck down against the teen's throat. "DAMMIT, LET ME GO!"

"Never!" Lucario yelled back. "It's not worth it to let you go!"

"IT'S WORTH IT! I'LL BE FINE AFTER I END THIS STUPID SUFFERING!" Chris cried.

"I won't let you go and that's final!" Lucario growled. "I'm not letting you toss it all way!"

"YOU DON'T KNOW HOW I FEEL! YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING!"

" **THEN LET ME KNOW! I WILL UNDERSTAND! I UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY YOU NEED ME IN YOUR LIFE NOW!** " he growled, letting his own tears fall down his cheeks onto the human's restrained arms.

That moment was when Lucario felt no desire of a struggle from his captive caretaker. All he saw was the teen being reduced to sobbing sounds under his breath, gradually getting loud and silent at random intervals. Though it seemed safe to let Chris go, Lucario was not

going to do it in fear he would escape his grasp. He had to keep going at it to cure Chris from his suffering.

"Please, Chris…" Lucario muttered, tears not stopping. "I… I want to help you so badly… You don't know how much it hurts me to see you like this…"

The teen had to give up there. All the tension in his head had to be let out in a better way than the one he had thought doing…

A moment of silence passed as both were back to sitting on the couch, with Lucario never letting go of Chris's right shoulder. His negative aura had eased down somewhat, but its force was strong despite being smaller visually. After about a minute of recollecting his thoughts, Chris sighed under his breath and looked outside to the rain. "… Thank you, Lucario," he muttered, his voice sounding a bit raspy and chocked up. "You… you saved me now from doing that again…"

"Again?" Lucario said. He remembered those… *thoughts* leaking out from Chris's head. He had a hunch he was going to know what those were. "I'm assuming… this happened before I met you?"

Chris slowly nodded his head, sadness welling up in his mind. "… It happened back when I had graduated kindergarten and we were living in a smaller house. I told you before this house wasn't made until five years ago." Lucario nodded. "You also remember me telling you they are IT professionals, correct?"

"Uh, yes. I do remember some of that and that they like to travel to work," Lucario said.

"Well… back then, their work never had them travel at all," Chris reminisced. "Work was just fine in the city. There was never a dull moment for them that convinced them it was necessary to go out there far away from… me." He completely ignored Lucario's right hand stiffening its hold on his shoulder, and so did Lucario.

"There wasn't a moment that work slowed down so much?" Lucario asked.

"No. It was all good," Chris said. "Our life was fine as it was, and I hardly remember a time when they didn't spend enough time with me. We practically were so happy… until…"

Silence came after that, only making Lucario increasingly more curious about the catalyst of the current line of events. "… Until?" Lucario repeated. "Did something horrible happen?"

"… Not really," Chris said, giving Lucario a side glance that then dropped down to the floor under his firm feet. "I'd say what happened had to do with… me."

"I… I don't know how something not bad happened that made all this happen," Lucario honestly said.

"My parents… loved me so much, Lucario," Chris told him. "They spoiled me rotten like you couldn't believe. I was that kid who had some nice school tools carrying around, the kid with the best toys to share, the kid who was one of the smartest ones who liked to help others… n-not that I'm bragging or anything… All those traits I had were because of my parents. My friends from school liked to talk about them because I used to boast they were the best."

Lucario grimaced. That was one perfect life right there. "I have a hard time trying to understand what could have possibly happened back then," he said.

"… Somehow, one day from what I can recall from my relatives, they thought they were wasting their talents if they easily managed to make a constant healthy living for all of us," Chris said. "Their names in their field of work were getting around after they helped the local companies, who spread the word around to other companies outside the city. Right before they came to thinking that they could do so much more, requests from outsider corporations came and piled up as they got to thinking what to do. Were they going to keep working

in their home city, or were they going to take the chance and hit it big?"

"… Oh… That is…"

"… Yes. They chose the latter because… they thought I deserved the best life could offer me through them," Chris said. "So many decisions were made when they made up their minds. They got in agreements with our relatives so that they could look after me in their absence, and even… I had agreed to let them go."

"But why would you agree with them?" Lucario questioned.

Chris slightly embraced himself. "… I was just a kid back then. I didn't know any better about the consequences that would happen, even after they told me those to my face. Just like any other spoiled kid, I was only interested mostly on material things. Back then, I was never aware of what I truly had until I… lost them… in a sense… Would you value the things you have now after you lost them, Lucario?"

Goodness. That question was pretty strong. "I… I would, but… but I already value everything I have," he said.

Chris flashed a small smile. "At least you know how important the stuff you have is. I wished I knew when I was a kid," he said.

"It is normal to children to be like that, Chris. Don't blame yourself so much for it," Lucario encouraged.

"Sometimes… I wonder if I shouldn't blame myself that much," Chris said. "And back when I thought it was going to be easy missing them… it wasn't. It wasn't, at all." He was shivering, and his aura was getting stronger in a bad way. "Weeks after I learned the hard way how I'd miss them… I slowly started going insane… One day, I even tried to…"

The shivering started getting worse, and Lucario, out of instinct alone, placed his other hand on Chris's left shoulder to hold him. The memory he was relieving seemed to be so horrible that it caused the teen to shed tears…

"H-hadn't it been because of my aunt… I-I was about to… to… **stab** myself on the chest with a knife on the table…"

Lucario's eyes shrunk at the response as Chris covered his face in shame of the memory. Though Lucario's hands were firmly grasping Chris's shaking body, he was at a loss of words, even in his head. Only the sobbing sounds kept him from losing his composure, but the human didn't move. He was too busy crying on his hands to do anything else…

"I-I was so young and I had already decided to kill myself to make it better… I-I was so close t-to making the same mistake again today… A-all because of them… B-because… o-of… t-them…"

The negative aura had been so annoying and stressing to deal with that Lucario. His inner Riolu was sobbing, wishing to make the human happy somehow…

"W-when that had happened, my aunt told my parents about it, and they all agreed that I needed therapy with them," he said. "They came back for two weeks, and I fooled myself into thinking they'd stay with me. I was very confused since… I was just a kid who didn't know any better… It was a very difficult time for me. I couldn't comprehend the things that were going on and… a-and… just thinking that I had the nerve to t-take my own life… I'm… a horrible person for trying to do it…"

The strong feelings building up in the puppy personification of Lucario's mind finally convinced him to embrace Chris, surprising the crying teenager. Chris's eyes widened, indirectly stopping the flow of tears on his face. He was too shocked, with the Aura Pokémon's chin resting on top of his head. He felt those shaking motions from Lucario trying to hold back his choking. Noticing that, Chris was not

expecting Lucario to be crying as well. And he also didn't expect his arms to embrace his body so tightly or his own arms clinging on them out of reflex…

"Everything is… fine…" Lucario consoled in a hushed voice. "Everything will be fine… Just trust me. You're not horrible at all."

"… L-Lucario… H-how can you be sure?" Chris asked, the sobbing coming back as he clenched his eyes shut. "E-every time they turn down coming down here, it makes me want to… It makes me want to think why I have to miss them so much i-if they don't make a real effort into coming here… I-I can't take this… I-I can't live with this…"

"… But I can live with you."

"… Y-you… what?"

"Er, um… I mean, I'll be there for… for your birthday," Lucario reassured. "Your parents… They won't be there, unfortunately, b-but I will," he hastily tried to reassure the teen. "You won't be alone when you wake up. I know I can't… I can't replace that feeling of your parents greeting you first thing in the morning, but… I want to do everything in my power to make you happy on that day…" He rested his right cheek on top of his head now. "… The only thing I can do is just be there, though. I… It's all I can do for you, sadly. I don't know if it will be enough to make you smile and be optimistic… But to me… it will be worth it to be there… for you."

"…" Chris did not know what to say to him. He was very much touched that the Aura Pokémon felt that way about him. They really were close friends if Lucario could be that emotional about his issues of loneliness. But, would it be enough to convince him that it was okay to smile again and try to forget how lost he felt?

"… No more words to say, huh," Lucario said, gaze looking away. "I'm sorry. I tried my best to make you happy s-so I guess it was too hard it came out all weird. That sounded so cheesy for sure."

"… N-no, it didn't," Chris said. "In fact… I… I'm feeling better already…"

True to those words, Lucario sensed that nagging negative aura dying out quickly, as a little blue flame of positive vibes was set ablaze in the center of Chris's psyche. But now the problem was it didn't seem to get any bigger. Those negative feelings were still compressing and overpowering it.

Screw that, Lucario thought. The Riolu pouted for a moment and barked angrily.

"That's nice," Lucario said, smiling a bit after the harrowing experience. "I can't bear to watch you lose hope and your attitude, Chris. I just… I just *don't* want to see you cry. If I could, I'd punch all of those bad feelings and rip them apart if it meant you'd… smile." He punched himself mentally because of how sappy he thought that sounded like, but the Riolu was happy, playfully but at the same time seriously punching the air.

"… Oh…" Even Chris thought that was a little corny… but all the same, he resumed crying. Lucario looked down and was frightened he had screwed up with his words.

"C-Chris, please, don't cry! I-I told you I'd do anything fo-!"

"It's f-fine," Chris choked up. "I-I'm crying because… because listening to you made me feel much better."

"Wha…?"

A quick check on Chris's red aura revealed the red hue was gradually starting to fade away, while allowing that little blue spark to overcome the bad vibes. Slowly and surely, the red flames were soon completely gone, and the blue flames were now occupying the entirety of the psyche. They may not have been much larger than usual. All the same, however, no negative emotions were present

anymore. Chris was crying tears of happiness, which Lucario wasn't used to seeing.

Chris's arms warmly embraced Lucario's side, and Lucario reacted doing the same without thinking. His mind was too busy trying to really comfort Chris that he didn't care they were getting too close. "Hearing you trying to make me feel better… After I tried to… take my own life again… I don't know what would've happened if you hadn't been here for me…" He sobbed for a bit. "It's like… like you had to be here to stop me…"

Lucario was a little scared his arrival to the "real" world could have possibly meant that he was fated to stop some random person from committing suicide while ignoring his needs to be in his own world of origin. It shouldn't have happened that way, right? He have had to have a right to decide he was needed for some other task he didn't know existed.

"… Or maybe… I'm being too dramatic… Sorry."

Or he thought the moment convinced him it was the absolute truth he couldn't deny.

Either way, Lucario was glad he helped someone close to him from a very dire moment of their lives. He oddly felt stronger not in the physical sense but as a person to be able to overcome such ordeal.

"So thanks," Chris said, leaning on Lucario's right shoulder. "Thank you, thank you, thank you times a million, Lucario…"

" *Yaaay! I made Chris happy times a million!* " barked the Riolu with all the glee, jumping around and spreading tears of joy all over his mindscape.

"… You're welcome, Chris," Lucario said, sighing. With his left hand, he clutched both of Chris's hands together. "The morning of your birthday, and any other day there is, I will be there to greet you."

Though Lucario completely missed the implications of that sentence, Chris knew there was a "unless I somehow return to my world" part so as to avoid himself from getting his hopes up; his very hidden selfish thought of having Lucario around forever… if it really was possible to somehow cast him back into his world. Right now, during the present, all that mattered was that Lucario was very supportive of him. Chuckling silently, Chris let a few more tears fall down his cheeks and said, "You really are the kindest Lucario I have ever met…"

"I learned from the best," Lucario boasted, though he wished that fact had been from his trainer.

"O-oh… T-thanks," Chris said again, sniffing a bit as the rain continued outside.

Lucario still kept a close eye on Chris's aura for the remainder days before his birthday came. To his surprise, those negative, sudden waves were gone completely, though they were replaced by a reduction in his positive vibes. They were better than nothing, Lucario thought, but he lamented how the aura would be brighter usually. The human's heart clearly ached about how he would miss his parents' presences during his day. There was no doubt that the talk Lucario had with him helped ease his mind… The birthday that was coming soon was something to fear for the Aura Pokémon. It was going to be the pinnacle of emotions for the teen to endure… so Lucario needed to play his cards right.

That momentous day came when the morning's sunlight illuminated the dormant room. Spotted with his back leaning on the side of the bed, Lucario opened his crimson eyes and turned to look at the light through the curtains. Today was his birthday…

He heard grumbling noises from over his shoulders, making him look over them at the waking human. Lucario spun around his seat and smiled, staring at Chris yawning.

On second thought, just a greeting wouldn't suffice to Lucario. Convinced by his inner Riolu, he leaned forward and pulled Chris into an embrace before he could realize what was going on. When he did, Chris blinked a few times and looked at the back of Lucario's head. "Good morning," Lucario spoke, "… and happy birthday, Chris."

"…" Chris wordlessly hugged the Aura Pokémon back and shut his eyes; his leaking eyes. He leaned his head to rest it on Lucario's head and muttered, "Thanks… and good morning to you, too."

Then Lucario growled in appreciation and started nudging his head against Chris's, much to the surprise of the teenager.

Then he stopped, noticing the move was too kind and unlike him to do. He pulled back, blushed, and cleared his throat as he readjusted his seat. "S-sorry. I was, uh, overwhelmed with emotions," Lucario said, his smile intact. "Today is your birthday, however. I wish you the best to enjoy your day to the fullest. I… I hope I helped you start on the right foot."

"… Oh. Thank you so much, Lucario," Chris said, shedding a few more tears that Lucario noticed. Tears clearly of joy that made the Riolu wag his tail quickly and vigorously. "I… I'd say just having you greet me at the start is so meaningful to me."

"Likewise," Lucario said.

And then, Chris hugged him back tightly. "Happy belated birthday to you, Lucario," Chris earnestly said, shocking the blue jackal.

"W-what?" Lucario was taken aback as Chris pulled back.

"I did my research a little bit, you know… Since you didn't know when your birthday would be, I decided to look up a few things on the internet," Chris revealed. Oh, the internet, Lucario thought. The strange place full of information the teen would rely on when doing his homework from time to time. But how was it possible for Chris to

deduce Lucario's birthday from the internet alone? "According to… well… when your world of origin was created, I think your birthday would be… September 28th."

"My… world of origin… Y-you mean my home, right?" Lucario said.

"Yes. Well, things are a tad complicated there…" Chris said. "Your generation wasn't made, but I guess the world was still there. You came out from that game and… it would surely make sense that you were born on September 28th. Or, maybe April 22th. I think September fits you more since that's when your generation first came to be." Only to Chris himself, he didn't exactly remember when he had taken Lucario's egg from the game. He didn't breed the only way for him to obtain a Riolu. He had raised that Riolu into a Lucario, and he could have sworn the data was still there. But ever since the real deal manifested in his world, any data of that party member was gone, though the proof he had obtained a Riolu and then a Lucario was there.

He felt there was no need for him to mention Lucario he had raised him through the game's player avatar. That was some complicated stuff to talk about right now and Chris didn't have a clear mind to discuss that much.

Back on the subject of his birthday, Lucario found out that September 28th was… two days ago when they had that incident happen. "… Oh… My birthday was 2 days ago, then," Lucario said, looking worried. "When…"

"Say no more, please," Chris said, knowing what Lucario meant. "You shouldn't feel bad for what happened. I'm… really grateful to you, Lucario. That's why I went out of my way to make you understand that day was special to me."

"S-special to you? I can't understand how it was special…"

"You comforted me during a very saddening time when I couldn't think clearly… That's why."

"… I… Oh…"

Chris chuckled. "To you, personally, it surely something you didn't wish, bu-"

"No, I disagree with that," Lucario quickly said. "I wished with all my power to make you happy and optimistic. It's… what… keeps me going," he struggled to say the very nice words. "… Yes, it's the truth. I'm very, very lucky I got to live here with you. I would have gotten into so many troubles I wouldn't be able to handle by myself. You're… very important to me."

"T-thanks, I guess," Chris said, blushing as well as Lucario. "… It was your birthday, though. I wanted to give you a present for your birthday and for aiding me back then." Confused at those words, Lucario saw Chris getting off from his bed and walked to the closet, where he opened the two doors and picked up a wrapped gift on the floor, though it looked like he struggled to lift it. Lucario stared at the gift, wrapped in glittering light blue with a black ribbon on top. Maybe he was thinking too hard, but those two colors were the most prominent in his body…

The present was set on the bed, right in front of Lucario's chest. He saw the box bouncing a bit. "A-a present for me?" Lucario stuttered.

"Yes. I thought real hard on what to give you yesterday when I went shopping with my relatives," Chris said. "I brainstormed a lot about what you'd like, so I found this. Go ahead! Open it up."

Lucario didn't know what was so fitting for him to use. He looked back at the present and slowly started to tear the wrapping paper and the ribbon, lost in thought trying to guess what the gift was. After making a little mess of torn paper on the bed, Lucario opened the cardboard box and peered inside… It was a pair of two large black dumbbells, with handles so long it would be hard for a normal adult hand to completely cover it and two weights each that looked and felt too heavy for beginners. And it was the truth. In the time Chris had carried the box with them, he was already sweating.

"Any strange looks I got from my uncle, he just brushed it off as me being a kid," Chris said, looking a tad peeved. "Sometimes I hate how people see me as just a kid. But here you go, Lucario. Your own set of dumbbells."

Receiving a gift like this was weird for Lucario, as this was the first time he was ever involved in such gesture. As he stared at the dumbbells for a little while - indirectly making Chris think the gift was not up to his expectations - he moved his hands down into the box to pick the gifts. Unlike how Chris had struggled to pick up the box and carry the thing all the way from the mall, Lucario easily heaved the two items on his hands, feeling almost no weight on them. There was just a bit of pressure as he started doing a few reps with no trouble at all.

"Oh, come on. These were the heaviest I could find…" Chris said.

But Lucario smiled and looked at him. "These are very nice… They're the only things in the house I can feel some weight on. And besides, I won't look weird doing reps with nothing on my hands," Lucario said. "Thanks for the birthday present, Chris… and I hope you have a good day today."

"… Thank you," Chris said, his aura flaring up with happiness. "I was a little worried you weren't going to like your gift, but thank you." Lucario set down his dumbbells and went to hug Chris, which he then returned the gesture. Honestly speaking, the teen didn't think the Aura Pokémon was going to hug him again. Now that he did, it gave him peace of mind during the day…

Later on, however, before Chris was about to set up preparations for their meal - which would be then followed by him leaving the house to go to his party with his relatives - the phone rang. The two of them were in the living room when it happened, with Lucario relishing his new training equipment. The dial receiver displayed that it was Chris's parents talking… Chris's aura had tensed up the moment he saw the numbers, and he swallowed up his breath as he took the call. "… Hello?" Chris asked. Lucario, whatever happened, was

ready to keep the teen from falling into depression. "… Thanks for the greetings, but I still know you aren't going to come today."

"…"

"I know you're sorry now. You already told me you couldn't come here in the end. Thanks for bringing my hopes up again."

"…"

"… Sure. You're going to make time later for me. Look, you're trying really hard to make amends, but I really can't trust your word anymore."

"…"

There were some sobbing sounds coming from a female Lucario heard over the phone. No doubt that was Chris's mother. Listening to her sobbing didn't make Chris change his expression… at first. His face twitched a bit as the talk continued.

"N-now you know how I felt when you couldn't make it… I know your job is the best one there is, and I believe this opportunity is golden for us to have a future… b-but what's the point if you can hardly see your son grow up? I want you two to understand we already are okay…"

"…"

"… I… I have no hopes what you're promising me is going to happen. Now that sounds way too good to be true," Chris said. "You've been doing this many times already it's hard for me to believe your word."

"…"

He sighed. "… Fine. I'll give you that chance again," he muttered. "But… this better be it, okay? Because I can't deal with this anymore… S-so… stop crying, mom."

The call had been pretty tense even if Lucario didn't need to use his aura senses to see how Chris truly felt. It ended soon after Chris and his parents had exchanged a few more words that weren't much related to the issue. When he hung up the phone, Chris rubbed his eyes a bit and looked back at Lucario. "What did they say?" Lucario asked.

"They… they said they want to come back and stay with me for real after they're done with their work schedule," he said. "… But I don't trust them much with their word. They're not even sure when that would happen. Like I told them, I'm not going to get my hopes up for a day they don't know will come at all."

"I'm sorry for knowing how badly your family matters are…"

"Oh no, on the contrary," Chris said, forcing a smile. "Now that you know this much about me… I can feel much better telling this to someone so close to me."

Lucario blushed. "Er, um, well, it's hard for me to ignore it since I can't leave the house…"

"Either way, it's okay," Chris said. He looked down at his feet for a moment, deep in thought. "… Do you think they'll come, though?"

"Huh? W-well…" Lucario had his guard down when that question appeared. "… M-maybe, but not for a long time. Like… probably a year or so…"

"… Yes. I think so, too. I'll be careful not to build my hopes up so much, though. It's not healthy and it didn't do any good to me…" Lucario reached out to grab his left hand. "Huh?"

"I'll be here to give you my support. Don't forget that," Lucario reassured with a small nod.

"… You really are the kindest Lucario I've ever met."

"I'm the only one. I win by default," he boasted, with his inner Riolu sticking out his little chest.

Chris chuckled. "Oh, you…"

And the day went on with Chris's renewed albeit general optimism. He went on to enjoy his birthday away from his house with his relatives, leaving Lucario for hours until the early hours of the night. The Aura Pokémon, just for fun, kept an aura link with Chris all day long to give him a sense that he was also there at the party - without the unneeded side effects of people screaming and calling the police to subdue him. He enjoyed seeing Chris talking to uncles, aunts, and grandparents, having fun playing with cousins close to his age, and the people frantically dancing to music that sounded too foreign to Lucario. The day turned out to be enjoyable with no sadness in the teen's psyche, easing Lucario's mind and entertaining the Riolu, who kept a very close eye on the human having fun.

Finding out when his birthday was… making Chris happy… Chris giving him a birthday present… Lucario thought he got it made.

The blue jackal felt strong emotionally, which was surely the greatest kind of power his kind was supposed to attain over physical strength. He thought his efforts to lend Chris a hand during his most troublesome times were the best actions he had done yet, as much as he forced himself to dislike the fact there was no way to go back and keep himself apart from him. But he couldn't help thinking trying to distance himself from Chris was wrong and even more wrong the more they spent time together. Deep down, Lucario really, really wanted to say Chris was…

Not yet. No, it was impossible to think it was the truth. There was no proof…

His inner dilemmas had to wait for another day in the future, because when Chris returned with the food he promised, Lucario (and by extension his inner Riolu) was off having a long nocturnal field day

after he came to meet one of the most wonderful dishes in Mexican cuisine to ever grace his eyes and nose…

Tacos.

… You made it through after all? Oh. Good. I hope the fact Chris tried to opt for suicide wasn't too strong to make you feel so uncomfortable. But I did warn you, so…

I had a good birthday myself, even though it wasn't as crowded as previous years since things get a little harder the older you get. I enjoyed spending time with my family. I will commit myself to making something bigger next year, because it looks like things just get quieter and quieter.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter. I encourage you all to review.

Or else Lucario will be put under harsh Spanish lessons day by day.

A Few Memorable Holidays

Oh no, that writing urge came back to me, and now my fingers won't stop.

I encourage all holiday lovers to read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 16: A Few Memorable Holidays

Time had passed since the tribulation that was being there for Chris during his time of need in his own day and things went back to normal, besides the fact Chris housed a dangerously powerful creature in his house away from public eyes. Lucario let the days go by as he subjected himself to more time to spend with the kind human. His inner Riolu was so used to the routine that he didn't think about ever leaving it behind, only making it all the harder for Lucario to consider ditching his new life.

But right now, he couldn't think about that. He was all too distracted by the increase in auras outside the house during the evening.

From what he learned from Chris, today was a special day for humans to celebrate, just like previous holidays that required specific arrangements (Lucario could only remember 4th of July, as he considered the fireworks to be entertaining). Though unlike the other holidays when the neighborhood was mostly deserted, this time, it was different, and it somewhat made the Aura Pokémon wary. Too many people walking in groups moved about, talking loudly and swinging those strange vegetable-shaped purses he saw through using his aura vision to borrow their sight behind their backs. But the most curious thing of all was how everyone was… not dressed normally. They all were wearing costumes that even Lucario judged as either confusing, the real deal (that to which his disappointment were always fake), or tacky.

If Lucario didn't know any better, he would think humans go nuts during "Heeeeyoween." Lucario couldn't remember the name well, because for all his focus during a meal days ago when Chris explained, he was too much into his breaded chicken to care about anything else. In fact, Lucario was up for some breaded chicken about right now. And that mix with the mashed potatoes and gravy. Oh goodness, it was so foolish to just worry about people when he could just go over to the fridge and get the goods. Nothing else mattered, after all. The world could burn for all he cared if he would eat some fresh chicken. Actually, if the world did burn, could Lucario use the fire to roast the chicken? It could probably increase the flavor six-fold.

"…"

Lucario growled to himself as a scolding. Once again, he let his stomach think on behalf of his brain. What Chris had commented about him liking meat was the biggest understatement of the century… and he didn't want to admit how much of a fan he was to all things meat.

Chris came back from the second floor, and Lucario was more or less disturbed when he saw the human dressed so… "I don't hand over candy during Halloween or even like to go trick-or-treating, but for this year, I had a… reason to dress up for the occasion this one time."

"…" Lucario was disturbed. Yes, very disturbed.

"… Okay, fine. You were the reason just to see your reaction," Chris chuckled, and then he got a little worried his otherworldly guest didn't say anything. Of course it wasn't because Lucario was scared. Disturbance was the other likely answer Chris found out. "… It's off-putting, isn't it."

From head to toe, Chris had dressed up in the same thematic color of a Lucario's body, though it wasn't a costume but a choice in clothing: a blue hat with pointy ears, a yellow vest with a spike

symbol underneath a long-sleeved blue jacket, black gloves with fake wrist spikes, blue pants, and black shoes. Chris even painted his face across and up his forehead with removable black paint…

"… Please, Chris," Lucario began, staring down at Chris, "tell me once and for all my kin live in this world and humans have secretly skinned them alive. I can at least find some solace I was not the first Lucario in the world."

Chris grimaced at that strange wish. "N-no, sorry, no. This is just an outfit. No Lucario were harmed in the making of this," the teen said. The uneasy look on Lucario's face told him something. "… And I'm not planning in skinning *you* alive. You'll throw me if I tried that."

"Oh, thank Arceus," Lucario sighed. The inner Riolu was glad to know his days weren't numbered, or Chris's.

"(What th-?! He HONESTLY thought I was going to do that?!)" Chris thought alarmed. "Anyway, you worry too much! On second thought, maybe I should've thought about not dressing up. I was seriously thinking you'd probably threaten me."

Lucario shook his head. "No, I wouldn't do that to you. It would be… not even close to rude," he said.

"Agreed," Chris said, taking off the hat and tossing it to the couch. Lucario was relieved to know no brain was showing through underneath the hat. "… But I kind of like the outfit now. I'll take off the paint mask so you don't feel so weird around me. Can't you think of me as your biggest fan or something?"

"I liked it better when you're dressed normally," Lucario said. He cursed in his head how affectionate that comment was.

"O-oh… That's nice of you to say," Chris said, looking away embarrassed. "Fine, then. I'll remove the whole outfit just because you said so. I don't want to make you feel uncomfortable thinking I

skinned a Lucario behind your back…" He shrugged and walked back upstairs to change out from his Lucario-themed outfit.

"(It's nice of him to do it for my sake,)" Lucario caught himself thinking, much to his dismay. Halloween night had been quite a ride of reactions and wild changes for him. He just wanted the holiday to get over with to go back to normal days of no strange occurrences and random bonding times with the teenager.

And the day was over the next day, though Chris had left early in the morning to go to the shops. Something about big sales on Halloween candy or some such. On that subject of candy, Lucario liked some of the candy Chris occasionally gave him to taste (chocolate became an unwanted candy, finding the amount of calories and chances of contracting pimples off-putting before Lucario could try it… that and Chris didn't want to risk finding out Lucario's digestive system was that of a dog that could result is deathly food poisoning for eating chocolate), though of course it wouldn't compare to the majestic taste of meat.

Speaking of meat, was there any in the fridg-?

"(**FOCUS!**)" Lucario mentally scolded loudly to himself, staring at his reflection in the bathroom's mirror after taking a bath. Good Arceus, he was falling to temptation easier with each passing day. His anger was so bad he swore he was glaring at himself.

His ears heard the door opening, and the distinctive sound of bags crumpling as they swung. "I'm home, and we're LOADED with sweets for months!" Chris enthusiastically called out.

Getting down to the living room, Lucario saw on the dinner table rather large bags containing all sorts of sweets packaged in colorful bags, most of which showed prominent dark colors and caricatures of pumpkins and ghouls. Really, there was a holiday centered on candy, but not on mea-?

"I went crazy buying so many half-off Halloween candy that this stuff will last us a very long while," Chris interrupted Lucario's awful tempting thoughts. "Help yourself to anything you want. You can avoid chocolate. I made sure to buy a lot of candy that's not chocolate. But you won't find any mint chocolate because…" Chris shrugged. "Eww. Who in their right mind likes that stuff? It's pure punishment."

The opinions regarding the horrid taste of mint chocolate do not reflect the author's stance on it.

Lucario was not sure why he heard that opinion regarding mint chocolate out of the blue. "…"

"S-so, yes, help yourself to anything after I pour them all down on several big bowls." Chris merrily giggled and went to the kitchen to fetch the bowls.

After bowls were filled to the brim with a wide assortment of candy that were neatly wrapped in spooky-looking designs, both Chris and Lucario sat down on the couch, staring at the bowls neatly arranged on the table. "So many colors…" muttered Lucario.

"I like almost every single type of candy, unless it's mint chocolate," Chris said. "Why don't you try some? Maybe you'll find something you'll like to eat from time to time." He showed him a strawberry lollipop. "Start with this."

Lucario picked the candy and stared at its hard red surface. Having some doubts, he put the candy in his mouth. His tongue immediately salivated when his taste buds were triggered by the sweet strawberry flavor coating his tongue. His inner Riolu began humming happily as his mouth blew up with the sweet flavor…

Though Lucario got a bit too excited that he chewed and shattered the feeble hard candy in a few bites to the point he accidentally ate part of the lollipop's stick and swallowed it whole. Despite the

somewhat indifferent look on Chris's face, Lucario looked pleased. "Huh, that did taste good," Lucario said.

"Y-yes, but I-I probably should've told you to lick the core inside your mouth rather than chewing it through. It's better to suck off all its flavor," Chris said.

"Really? I thought for sure I had to chew it whole."

"That's just your biting strength talking… Here, try it again." Lucario was handed another strawberry lollipop.

Once more, Lucario tried the piece of candy and refrained to chew it whole again, this time opting to suck it. Though not as exciting as it was biting it, his mouth began tasting the strawberry flavor much better than cracking it apart with his fangs. The sweet flavor seeped into his tongue, sending a refreshing wave of strawberry sweetness that caused the Riolu in him to wag his tail. So it wasn't meat-flavored, but it still proved to be a worthwhile distraction.

So much his mouth was drooling a bit.

And so much more he had been sucking in peace for half a minute, ignoring everything and everyone around him. His constant hmm-ing was proof enough for Chris he was enjoying the candy a lot, albeit it was a tad disturbing just to watch in silence that he had to interrupt Lucario's visit to candy heaven.

"W-well, that about tells me you really liked it," Chris said. Lucario snapped out from his trance by opening his eyes and blinking in realization he had been put under a spell of sweetness. He blushed in embarrassment and removed the lollipop from his drooling mouth and quickly licked his lips clean. "Anyway, does this mean you'll be open to tasting candy more often? I ask because these bowls are going to last us well beyond several months."

If the candies had the untold power of taking Lucario's mind out of meat, there was no way he was going to refuse ignoring them. Not

that he would ever tell Chris something like that ever. "Yes. But first, I should try out other kinds. What about this one?" He picked one.

"Oh, that's lemon bubblegum. That one you can chew and keep chewing until you suck out all the flavor out of it."

After a little bit of unwrapping the little yellow matter, Lucario tossed it inside his mouth and started chewing it. It was a peculiar feeling to feel it spread around his mouth, getting clogged between his fangs, though he felt the flavor seeping out of it that compelled him to keep chewing.

Though he felt he had sucked too much already and swallowed the gum. Lucario smiled pleased at Chris, who looked a bit shocked. "That was good. It felt a bit funny to chew, but I can see why it's tasty," he said, and then he couldn't help noticing the distraught look in Chris's face. "… I didn't chew it fast enough, did I."

"N-no, that's not it. You shouldn't have swallowed that. You should've spat that out in a trash can because once you're done sucking all the flavor it is useless to have it in your mouth," Chris explained.

"…"

"…"

"… I never could've realized eating candy would be this complicated. What is even anything?" Lucario asked, clearly confused. Chris could only reply with an amused chuckle. Lucario didn't find that action insulting. He did chuckle as well.

After several trial-and-errors, Lucario had mastered the sacred art of eating candies right. It was an adventure of different flavors that clashed and opened his palate. Pineapple, banana, cherry, grape, orange, mandarin, etc. The world of flavors packed in hard crusts and soft fabrics had it all, and he couldn't fathom just how extensive candy was. Lucario could tell that not all same flavors tasted the same from one brand to another. In his mind, the Riolu happily

gobbled up imaginary candy, praising life for making such curious things.

"Well, that's probably the last time I'll ever see a Lucario eating so much candy," Chris said after Lucario had eaten a small sample of a strawberry roll. "You really did enjoy it all?"

"Yes. It was… entertaining," Lucario said. "I think that is the word? Everything was tasty… Thank you."

Chris blushed. "O-oh, thanks. I'm glad you enjoyed. And we still have like over two-hundred candies left." They looked at the bowls overstocked with candy that some were overflowing a bit. "These are going to last us maybe over a month. They're good for a side snack after eating a meal."

Meat.

Lucario grunted in his head when that word came out of nowhere. Truly, he was never going to avoid it no matter how hard he tried. Despite the candy having done a decent job at distracting him, it all seemed futile. He looked away for a brief moment and only noticed that there were two bags unaccounted for on the dining table. "What else did you buy? Do those bags have more candy?" he asked.

Chris turned to the bags. "Oh… Oh, no. Those aren't candy." He got up from the couch and walked over to the bags where he took out a few things to show to Lucario.

"(… Oh, dear Arceus, why,)" Lucario grieved mentally.

Held in the teen's hands were packed meat. Raw steaks and raw ground beef. It all seemed like some sort of joke set by some evil clown trying to humiliate Lucario's hunger for meat. His eyes couldn't decide whether to gain a feral look or just break in tears at the pictures before him, so they just settled with a hard stare that Chris defined as simple surprise. Which was the kind of look he wanted to get out of Lucario.

Then again…

When had Lucario ever seen raw meat uncooked?

The realization came to him very quickly after a little thinking. Despite the shock, he was rather confused why raw meat showed up now. He never recalled Chris ever having or using raw meat before. So why…?

"Before you ask, I'm not serving meat raw," Chris said.

That was a relief to hear. "But then how will we eat it?" Lucario asked. "I recall you always had your relatives send food with you." It was known to Lucario that Chris's extended family looked after him in the absence of his parents. They were the ones who sent food to him whenever home delivery was an overrated option. Though he would never have the chance to tell them, Lucario was grateful that the majority of dishes were meat based. He could really have a few tacos by no-

"(**FOCUS!**)" Lucario yelled at himself in his head. He focused on the meat before him. It was not the thing he wanted to focus on. "(**DAMMIT!**)" he cursed mentally.

"W-well… I'll cook it myself," Chris responded.

That response seriously took Lucario's attention. "Wait, what? You will?"

The teen looked a bit embarrassed as he put the meat back on the table. "L-look… It's… rather obvious you enjoy eating meat. A lot." Lucario could only shut his eyes and bury his eyes in the cushion of the couch. Chris did see the sheepish smile on Lucario's lips, so there was no way Lucario was complaining about that fact. "S-so… I have seen a lot of videos and consulted with my relatives how to cook it the way they do it. Needless to say, some of them got a bit excited, saying the family tradition of cooking meat will pass down to me and continue from there and all that. And… well… because I…"

Lucario lifted his eyes from the cushion, confused at Chris's stammering.

"I… I really want you to feel at home here, even if it's a bad idea for you to go out," Chris said, his little smile sincere. "T-that's why… I intend to make you happy in any way I can, if that ironically means getting to your heart through your stomach." He grunted at himself. "Oh, god. That sounded so sappy… But anyway! T-that's my way to make sure you enjoy your stay a lot more before you ever find your way back home."

"…"

That was an extremely powerful yet simple message that resonated with Lucario a huge deal. He was touched by Chris's drive to make him happy so much he was willing to cook meat for him. Despite how ironic it was that Lucario tried so fervently to pretend meat didn't exist, now it all felt so right to acknowledge it this one time. He was so surprised he didn't notice his astonished look as he stared at Chris's smile. For just a brief moment, Lucario agreed to himself that it was worth fighting the world if it meant keeping Chris safe.

So he shook that thought away, much to his inner Riolu's chagrin.

And yet… he was very happy deep down.

"You… you don't have to go through all this trouble just for me," Lucario broke the silence, feeling guilty.

"No, I… I think you're very worth the trouble," Chris replied. Lucario blinked in more surprise. "Besides, if it's not for you, then it's for me. After all, eventually I have to learn how to cook more for myself. I can't expect to let someone cook for me my whole life. Even if it's just for me, I really want you to be a part of it." He chuckled, blushing. "You're welcome to join me in this little endeavor."

"Well… if…" Lucario gave up in his head. The meat offer was too tempting, but the overwhelming affection coming from his friend won

by a landslide. "If… you insist…"

"Great!" Chris piped up, relief in his face. "Why don't we get started? Ooh! I'll start doing the most basic one. A steak!" He rummaged through the bags, unaware that Lucario had gotten lost in thought through his stomach clamoring the godly food.

The Aura Pokémon couldn't quite win the battle of affection when meat was on the table, or, soon literally at the table in front of him. At the dining table, Lucario watched from afar at the human turning on the stove and frying a large piece of raw meat on the frying pan, adding a bit of salt and pepper. A few minutes later, the exquisite aroma of meat being cooked filled the kitchen's space and leaked towards the dining table into Lucario's ever so vigilant nostrils…

And that was just a milestone in their relationship that Lucario would forever cherish, both because it was meat, and because Chris was making a very honest effort to make Lucario happy at home.

A month later…

As autumn slowly began to cross into winter, the season started to show its changes outside, with the usual greenery of trees turning into several shades of red and yellow. Though with its visual changes, Lucario sensed other peculiar changes, namely the fact he sensed dozens of auras converging inside many houses, leaving some houses vacant.

Apparently, the strange occurrence of converging auras, or people, was because it was Thanksgiving Day.

From what he had gathered from Chris, Thanksgiving Day was supposedly a day celebrating bountiful harvest from long ago that involved some group called the Pilgrims who shared said harvest with Native Americans, signifying a period of peace when people expressed their gratitude and thankfulness to others. Nowadays, the holiday was a popular holiday when many American citizens get together and replicate the celebration with a plethora of different

food. Of course, after having seen Chris steadily grow into his role of meat cooker, Lucario had shamelessly asked if meat was involved in the food.

To his surprise, it wasn't.

Instead, it was some mysterious meat called "turkey."

From what he next gathered when Chris had seen the strange grimace on Lucario's face, turkey was a type of meat like chicken, but its taste was different, and it usually never gets as much attention outside of Thanksgiving Day. Ironically, Chris had never brought turkey meat before, which would mean the day was the first chance Lucario would get to eat it.

Speaking of eating it, it was almost evening, and Lucario had been left alone at the house while Chris had gone to celebrate with a dozen of relatives on the southern side of the city. Despite being a few miles away, it wasn't outside Lucario's range to pick up using his aura senses. Just like other places, the atmosphere in that family gathering was positive, auras constantly flaring up with positivity among Chris's own. Lucario employed his aura sight skill to see the reunion through Chris's eyes, spotting many people that looked Hispanic in nature and appearance, though some were louder than others, making it rather amusing that Chris himself could easily blend with them if it wasn't for the fact he wasn't that excitable or loud.

Seeing such a family hanging out together and having a good time made Lucario wonder if he even had a family back in his universe… Were they worried about him? In fact, he pondered for so long what kind his family was. In his head, he imagined his father to be a warrior; possible even a real master of aura. His mother would surely be the sweetest female Lucario who doted on him. And if possible, he may have had siblings too. He liked more the role of being the big brother, assuming his apparent towering size was a clue to how important he was, but what if he was the younger brother? What if he had an older brother much stronger… and bigger than him? What if his father didn't like him? He worried he was a family outcast.

Thinking about his imaginary family and his expectations of them worried him. Without anyone physically close right now, Lucario felt lonely. He slumped a bit on the couch, sighing, looking around in a futile attempt to see if anyone was there, even if visual and aura senses said otherwise. He thought on Chris himself, who, despite having many relatives, did not have the benefit of living with his parents either, even if they were certainly real. The Aura Pokémon recalled that birthday when Chris was driven to despair when his parents had cancelled a visit back home due to work, and now, Lucario visualized him in that scenario…

If he ever had a freak out like that…

The Riolu in his head cowered.

Lucario shook his head to shake off the negative thoughts. Family was truly precious, no doubt. All he had in the world right now was Chris, who looked like all he had was Lucario in turn. The human was proof that he could have so much and yet yearn for what was missing in his life. If only there was a real way back home…

The Aura Pokémon didn't have his aura senses up, but his hearing was more attentive to noisy changes, and so he turned to look towards the door when he overheard the sound of a car stopping in front of the residence. He then heard laughter before a door closed shut and the car took off down the street, with Chris's aura coming closer as the sound of noisy plastic bags rustled. The door eventually opened, and Chris walked inside. Lucario, on instinct but unaware, flashed a relieved smile. "I'm back!" Chris said, his happy expression and positive aura relaxing Lucario.

"That you are," Lucario said. "How was it?"

As Chris closed the door and placed the bags at the dining table, he said, "As always, these family reunions get pretty lively during Thanksgiving. Yet another one my parents miss. I hope they at least had a good one at New Mexico with some relatives I have living there."

"(I wish I knew where my own parents are at least…)" Lucario thought.

"But anyway," Chris continued, "I didn't eat as much over there because I wanted to eat with you tonight."

Lucario's ears perked up. "Um, eat with me?"

"Well, yes. I'm so excited to see you eating turkey." The teen revealed several white boxes for food takeout inside the bags. There were about six boxes with contents Lucario wouldn't see with his aura senses, though some alluring scents were leaking out. "Get ready for what's coming."

A few minutes flew by as Chris prepared whatever he had brought, Lucario sat on his chair at the dinner table. A plate was being heated up in the microwave, and that smell… or smells were getting progressively stronger in nature. For a brief moment, Lucario felt like he was only alive through his nose, the smell turning intoxicating at the drop of a hat. When the microwave dinged and Chris took out quite a large plate, Lucario was more than curious what it had on top. In fact, it looked like Chris wasn't even done with the plate arrangements, because he was adding a bunch of macaroni. Whatever else was on the plate, it was a bit of a mystery, but Lucario could detect the scent of mashed potatoes.

After some agonizing seconds of wild mass guessing, the plate was being taken towards him and was finally placed in front of him.

Lucario's nose got the full deluxe treatment.

His plate was wide, carrying several slices of white-looking ham bathed with some light brown substance that had also invaded the small mountain of mashed potatoes, making said mountain look like a volcano. On the side was the bunch of macaroni mixed with mayonnaise, mustard, and bits of green onion Chris had placed earlier, making the picture look more appetizing, though Lucario's

attention was zeroing on the white-looking ham that kept making his inner Riolu salivate. Was that perhaps the turkey Chris mentioned?

Not only that, but Chris had brought a hamburger bun-looking bread that wasn't cut in half, alongside a see-through gelatinous slice on a smaller plate.

"Here it is! I hope you enjoy," Chris said, placing a glass with soda next to Lucario's plate. "By the way, make sure you eat the turkey with the mashed potatoes and gravy. Same goes for the macaroni. You'll love it." He went to go get his plate ready at the kitchen, leaving Lucario to stare at the appetizing presentation.

Hesitating at first, Lucario took his fork and speared one of the slices of turkey, cutting it with a butter knife for easier handling. Then, at Chris's recommendation, smeared it with the mashed potatoes and gravy. With the process seemingly done, he brought the food to the reach of his mouth, the smell utterly dominating his sense of smell, but he eventually took a rather reckless big bite and chewed his food.

Lucario's eyes went wide.

His taste buds were dancing with glee, the skin in his mouth salivating almost immediately. The turkey flavor mixed with the gravy-sated mashed potatoes was a powerful untold combination of food he had never experienced before, right up there with the usual mixture of steak and mashed potatoes. His fangs rendered the turkey asunder, his tongue lashing out in an attempt to get all the flavor collected. Meanwhile, his inner Riolu cheered, intoxicated with the overwhelming and incredible food that got into his real self's mouth. It was rather shameful that the food had to be swallowed, but such was life.

Said life had more turkey to spare, though.

After dwelling in pleased growls in his mouth, Lucario looked back down at his plate and resumed eating, trying to hold himself back

from devouring everything too quickly lest he wanted hiccups. Every bite, every time the fork was licked clean between bites, every bulge going down his throat, it was all marvelous. He quickly got into his usual meat-eating routine, except with the legendary turkey. Although the turkey was clearly the main attraction, he also indulged himself with the macaroni, the smooth bread with the dark top, and the sliced beet. Though not as potent as the turkey itself, each of those side dishes only added to the overall experience.

As Chris quietly slipped into his seat, he stared at Lucario living his own fantasies, seeing as the Aura Pokémon wasn't focused on anything else. The teen was very glad that Lucario was so enthralled that Chris decided not to interrupt, fearing it would probably sour the mood. He focused on his own plate, which was rather more vacant than Lucario's plate due to already pretending he had gotten full at his family gathering.

The minutes flew by as Lucario eagerly asked for seconds, never noticing his long tail wagged in happiness and anticipation. Like the first plate, the second plate suffered the same fate; to be sacrificed to Lucario's mouth, tongue, fangs, throat, and stomach. Chris tried to eat his one and only plate slower just to keep Lucario some company and to avoid raising the suspicion watching the large man eating so passionately was entertaining. He succeeded.

Once Lucario's second plate was figuratively licked clean, he set down his fork, his empty drink, and slumped back on his chair, his thick padded hands resting on his full stomach. He even hung his head back over the top edge of his chair, relaxed, a sight Chris had honestly not see Lucario do before.

Clearly a big win.

Finishing his own plate at last, Chris looked happy. "So how was it?" he asked.

"Amazing…" Lucario said, head still resting. "The flavor… the taste… the texture… everything was just right… and some more…"

"Um. Wow… You really liked it?"

Lucario pulled back his head, nodding. "Yes. It was… how should I say… fantastic? It's right up there with cooked meat. Maybe. Perhaps even better? I can't decide." He chuckled. "Thank you. This was truly delicious…" He blushed, smiling. "N-not that… that you haven't introduced me to worse food before or anything. All the food I've tasted all this time has been a real delight."

If only Chris could smile bigger than he did, only managing a small smile. "Oh… That's nice of you to say. Thank you," he said, nodding. Lucario showed a happy expression, completely unaware of it, much to his inner Riolu's happiness. "Well. We completely skipped on what we're thankful about."

Lucario's happiness was met with some confusion. "What?" he asked.

"It's customary for people at the table to express their gratitude for things that have happened to them up until Thanksgiving," Chris explained. "I didn't want to interrupt our dinner because I held you up waiting for a bit longer. Um, sorry for that…" Indeed, Lucario recalled Chris saying he was going to be an hour later than they usually ate. "So… why don't express our gratitude right now? To end on a good note?"

Lucario was a bit taken off-guard by the suggestion, actually being unsure how to put his gratitude into words. Didn't he just express that a moment ago? Was there more he had to say? That was when he realized just being thankful for the food was a rather pointless thing to be thankful for, seeing as he was always well-fed every day. Also… what if whatever he had to say would sound too nice to Chris himself? He worried he was going to screw up his failed efforts to distance himself from the person he thought wasn't really his trainer.

Back when Lucario was checking on Chris during his family's gathering, he did see him having a turn to express his gratitude.

"I-ah… I used my aura senses to see and hear you and your relatives from here. I heard you doing what you're suggesting we do here," Lucario pointed out. "Wouldn't it be redundant for you to repeat the same speech to me?"

Chris was more than a little embarrassed the Aura Pokémon had used his sixth sense to listen to him all the way from their home. "O-oh, yes. You're right," Chris said.

Lucario sighed in his head. His inner Riolu grunted with disappointment.

"Though, to be fair, I didn't mention you in that speech at all."

Lucario's eyes widened for a bit. His inner Riolu wagged his tail with excitement.

"Imagine me revealing to almost everyone I'm housing you in secret here. They'd think I'm crazy," Chris said, giggling a bit at the thought. "Which is why what's left of my gratitude is all about you. Do you want to hear?"

It would be really rude to turn the offer down. Moreover, Lucario was more than curious about what Chris would say about him. "Uh, sure… Go ahead," Lucario said.

"Good! Here I go then," Chris said, clearing his throat. "I'm… well…"

Lucario sensed a spike of a feeling of shyness in Chris's aura as the human fidgeted his fingers, looking away with embarrassment on his face. "You…?" Lucario trailed off.

"I… am really, really happy I got to meet you," Chris said, looking back at Lucario, though then Chris expressed some lament in his now worried expression. "But then… I know I'm being so selfish saying this because of your predicament stuck in this world away from home. My own happiness shouldn't try to shackle you to my home, because you surely miss whoever your trainer is. Sometimes,

I think I'm doing so much wrong trying to give you a good home where you can enjoy yourself. It's really not my place to be so attached to a Pokémon who's not mine but from someone else… And… well…" Chris sank back on his chair, a few tears welling up in his eyes that Lucario spotted and gasped at.

How did expressing gratitude suddenly lead to Chris feeling sad?

As sadness began to overwhelm the human's aura, Lucario's instincts kicked in, his inner Riolu putting up a tough look. He just couldn't let Chris suffer. "N-no! You're not doing wrong!" Lucario said, standing up, startling Chris. "Chris, please… Don't… don't feel sad because of what's happening to me!"

"But…" Chris chocked up.

"Listen!" Lucario said, looking sad himself. "I… I'm very grateful for everything you've done for me! In no way do I think you're a bad person. All the attention you've given me… all the happy times we've had together up until now… I wouldn't forget them for the world!" His strong fists clenched. "In fact, if anything, while I'm here, I want us to enjoy each other's company for as long as we can… no… maybe forever, even! I like you *that* much, even if you're not my trainer!"

Chris fell speechless as Lucario's determined look stared his way from across the table.

The Aura Pokémon mustered a smile. "And… if I had the chance… I would make sure you and my trainer would be best friends. It'd mean we would be together," he said, a few tears strolling down his cheeks. "So please… say that you're grateful that I'm here with you… without feeling guilty about feeling happy."

The human composed himself, sitting up straight but unsure what to do next as the tall Pokémon's gaze was on him. "… Lucario…" Chris muttered.

"Yes?"

"… This… is going to sound a bit crazy… maybe cheesy… no, definitely cheesy, but…" Chris looked down at his knees. "… Can… can I hug you?"

"… Hug me?" Lucario said, somehow not being the least weirded out at the request.

"I-I know… It's stupid… I… I shouldn't have said that," Chris said, chuckling, unable to look at Lucario after saying the crazy request. "Forget I said anything. I made things so awkward…"

Though, after a few seconds of silence, Chris heard footsteps going around the table and coming closer to him. Eyes wide, he looked to his right, seeing Lucario right by his side, kneeling down so he was closer at eye level with him. The picture looked like a big guardian kneeling down to listen closer to his liege's words, though in this case, the big guardian slipped his left arm behind his liege's back. Lucario, smiling a bit, said to Chris, "Make sure you hug me from the side. I still wonder why the hell I have a spike in the middle of my chest."

Surprised and hesitating at first, Chris almost lunged at Lucario and embraced him from the side, arms looping around Lucario's neck. Lucario had gasped a bit at how quickly it happened, but he chuckled, holding Chris tight on his left arm while his right hand made sure not to pull him closer from his back. Chris, unable to hold himself, sobbed silently, though his brimming aura was overwhelmed with happiness that Lucario sensed… and felt completely, putting his mind and body at ease.

It all felt just right to Lucario somehow. His and Chris's auras mixed together, emotions manifested in invisible flames being in harmony he couldn't quite describe well. The inner Riolu rejoiced, running around in circles, barking Chris's name over and over, representing Lucario's honest desires to continue the moment for much longer.

"Why… why are you doing this for me?" Chris asked, face resting over Lucario's shoulder.

"I guess I detest negative auras, or seeing people sad," Lucario said, patting Chris's back. "And since you're… well… the best friend I've ever met, I can't just do nothing while you break down before me. I refuse to see you sad. Even if something simple like a hug will make you happy… I'll do it. Gladly."

Chris hid a smile as he sunk his face into Lucario's neck fur. "… O-oh, Lucario… You're too nice…"

"No." Lucario leaned his head into Chris's. "This is just how I am."

The two held the hug for almost half a minute, until Chris was the first one to push out of it, with Lucario making sure he wasn't going to slip down. Chris cleaned his face from his tears as Lucario watched him. "… Um… thank you, Lucario…" Chris said, shyness in his eyes. "I… I hope that wasn't weird."

"Weird? Nonsense. I enjoyed that quite a lot," Lucario admitted, his left hand still behind Chris's back. "If you ever need a shoulder to cry on… I'm open. If I'm not nearby, I'll come dashing, even."

The teen chuckled, touched by the Pokémon's words. "… You know what? I should… I should add something to my speech," he said.

"What would that be?"

"I'm so thankful I have such a nice and strong Lucario by my side," Chris said. "… S-sorry. I just keep saying a lot of wei-"

"And I'm so thankful I have such a thoughtful and kind friend by my side," Lucario interrupted, surprising the teen. "… I guess that makes two of us now."

"… H-heh heh… Y-you're silly, you know that?"

"Not as silly as you, I suppose."

"H-hey!" Chris saw Lucario letting out a small laugh that rubbed off on him, joining with the laugh as well, Lucario's hand never letting go

of his back.

Lucario was right to assume they were going to sleep well that Thanksgiving Day, honestly never feeling guilty about what had transpired in the day. He thought back on how he defined Chris as a best friend, wondering if it was appropriate to say that with so much confidence even if Chris wasn't his trainer; the default best friend in Lucario's head. His inner Riolu was sure he said the right thing, supportive of seeing the teen brighten up thanks to him. For all intents and purposes, the Aura Pokémon believed he did it all right.

… Plus, there was a week worth of turkey left. Lucario had it made, feeling like the king of the house. His inner Riolu was proud to be so damn spoiled.

I had initially considered adding Christmas to this chapter, but I ultimately decided to leave that for its own chapter (the next one) because its content would be longer, but probably not as long as these two holidays put together.

At the risk of sounding like a promoter, do follow me on Twitter under "AuraGuyChris" for story updates and my random ramblings from video games and other stuff.

Please do review to let me know your thoughts! Assuming it's not just a cheap "you're back!" message…

A Christmas

I realize we're not on Christmas yet, but bear with me. You're surely putting the Christmas tree up as we speak.

Please read on, enjoy, and review.

Chapter 17: A Christmas

December was known as the time of the season when people were more busy and about, preparing for perhaps the most important holiday of the whole year; Christmas. From around the neighborhood, houses were decorated with a wide variety of items that certainly seemed far more uplifting and positive than the few houses that used freaky Halloween decorations. The most prominent of decorations were that of a fat white-bearded man wearing red; the so-called Santa Claus.

Lucario also took notice on how the temperature was colder than usual, though him being part Steel-type Pokémon that resisted Ice-type moves and possibly the fact he was definitely stronger than whatever the average Lucario was, his body didn't register low temperatures, unlike how he would turn into a sweating mess at hot temperatures due to the very same Steel-type nature of his being. That was all well and good for him to be resilient to cold, but not so much for Chris, who had to wear long-sleeved shirts and sweaters.

The teen, wearing a blue sweater with black sweatpants, was placing firewood in the living room's chimney located right of the flat screen TV. Using used newspaper as paper to light up fire, Chris used a match and set the paper aflame, the firewood slowly being bathed in fire. "B-brr… I hope the wood starts to burn soon," Chris said, standing up from the floor. "Luckily, thanks to you, we have plenty of firewood to make the house warm."

Sitting on the couch, Lucario said, "But wouldn't it easier to use the heaters?" The jackal had seen Chris using some white machines that exuded heat when turned on around the house. He even used one at their room and left it on while sleeping.

"It is a nice feeling using a chimney to burn wood now and then. Besides, outside the stove, it's a fun way to roast marshmallows," Chris said. Lucario eyed the bag of large marshmallows and long, thin wooden sticks on the table. The wood was starting to burn, increasing the temperature around the living room steadily behind the iron bar pedestal it was on. "Are you ready?"

"Um… let's see…" Prior to setting up the chimney for use, Chris had told Lucario that they were going to roast marshmallows. Having tried one before roasting it, Lucario deemed the spongy snack an interesting object, finding some appeal to it with its strange taste, although he was a bit annoyed chewed bits stuck to his fangs until licked. Wondering how the flavor would taste when roasted, he picked a stick and skewered two large marshmallows, Chris doing the same. "Like so, right?"

"Yes. Come over here," Chris invited, patting the right side next to him facing the chimney. Lucario stood up from the couch and went over to squat next to the teen.

For that brief moment they looked at each other, the inner Riolu gleefully barked. Chris didn't react and only turned towards the chimney, missing the small smile on Lucario's lips.

The jackal focused his attention on the chimney, where Chris stuck his stick inside, his marshmallows hovering above the weak flame. Lucario followed suit, putting his on the side over another flame. "Alright, here's the thing. The marshmallows will start catching fire. Once they do, pull back and slowly turn the stick around so the flame goes around the sides. I'll tell you when you should blow the fire out," Chris explained.

It didn't take long before Chris's marshmallows caught a weak fire, roasting the underside. Lucario watched him pulling the stick out of the chimney. "Yours is ready. Pull it out," Chris instructed. Almost forgetting, Lucario pulled his out, staring at the flame roasting his marshmallows. "Now do this." The jackal watched the teen slowly turn his stick, the flame slowly but surely burning the pair of marshmallows together as it engulfed more of it. And so, Lucario mimicked Chris perfectly, a bit thrilled to see the white skin of the snacks turning black.

"Are you sure we're not burning them too much?" Lucario asked.

"No, it's fine. What matters is how the inside will be like," Chris reassured. "Okay, blow the fire out now." The two, almost in unison, blew the fires on their marshmallows, leaving an almost-charred top on their sticks, trails of thin smoke on the tips. Unsure if it was safe to bite the black snack, Lucario saw Chris biting a side of it.

Lucario was mildly surprised that the charred marshmallow was melted inside the black core, seeing the sticky substance stick into Chris's lips as he bit it. The big jackal looked at his own marshmallows and took a careful bite on the side.

He was surprised. The marshmallows were melted from the inside, somehow tasting different than uncooked. Lucario's tongue wrestled with the sticky substance, actually enjoying the flavor better than before. He and Chris enjoyed the charred snack together, slowly eating away. "How is it?" Chris asked.

"It's… good. Not bad at all," Lucario said, looking relieved. His inner Riolu, meanwhile, rejoiced, tossing his hands up and wagging his tail. "I wouldn't mind doing this more often with the chimney burning wood."

"We can also just use the stove in the kitchen when not using the chimney. No need to burn wood for this," Chris said.

"I don't know…" Lucario looked at the chimney, feeling refreshed to be next to its warmth. "It's… it's nice, you know. Eating roasted marshmallows next to the fire."

"Oh…" Chris's smile was a shy one. "Y-yes. It's nice. Certainly very different than using the stove."

Lucario chuckled, looking his way, nodding. "Thank you, Chris. This was nice," he thanked.

Chris's expression was a thankful one, though he couldn't shake the feeling that Lucario was being a bit nicer to him the last couple of months. If something as small as eating roasted marshmallows by the fire made the Aura Pokémon grateful, was it a sign he was feeling more comfortable than before? There was also the fact Chris was pulling almost all the stops to satisfy Lucario, as the teen was practicing his meat cooking skills and steadily improving every week when he snuck in a meat dish Lucario practically devoured without a second thought. Perhaps the jackal was coming to terms with his impossible predicament?

No, that wasn't it. Lucario was simply more grateful than ever. That was what Chris thought. Though it was no reason to stop if they were both enjoying their time together more, even as something as small as eating roasted marshmallows by the fire was very meaningful.

"You're welcome, big guy," Chris said.

"(Big guy… I like it,)" Lucario thought, feeling empowered by the stealth compliment. His inner Riolu grinned, puffing up his chest and standing on the tip of his toes to appear larger. He even let out a roar, though being a Riolu, it came out a bit cutesy to the general person.

"Well!" Chris stood up, having finished his snack. "It's time I get to work and bring the Christmas tree to the living room."

"The… Christmas tree?" Lucario repeated, still holding his stick.

"Yes. Many people have already set up a Christmas tree by the last days of November, but I usually call relatives over to set it up in my house," Chris explained. "But this year, I think I can handle it alone. I have the tree stored up in a box in the attic. It's a fake Christmas tree, so it's not real wood or anything. Just plastic that looks like a pine tree."

The attic was an area of the house Lucario hadn't seen yet, mostly because he wasn't curious enough to wander upstairs into the unspoken third floor.

Chris looked embarrassed at Lucario, who irked an eyebrow. "I… uh… had this crazy idea to have you help me bring the pieces down… and… maybe decorate the tree together…" he said, almost muttering the whole sentence. "But, um, it's okay if you don't want, though! Oh god, I don't even know why I blurted that out…"

"Hmm…" Though Lucario wasn't exactly an interior-decorating buff, he really couldn't help giving his aid to the teen. If there was just any way he could help, Lucario wasn't going to turn down the offer… mostly because it was coming from Chris himself, subconsciously trying to make sure the human was happy. "I… can help you," Lucario hesitated to say, though his small smile was faster than his words were.

"… Huh, really?" Chris asked, actually looking surprised.

"Yes… I… want to. Sure," Lucario said, standing up and looking down at the teen. "Let me help you out, please. I could probably learn how to… decorate? Um, yes."

"…" Chris tilted his head, feeling that Lucario was trying his best to appear interested. "Is it me, or are you… indifferent? Like you don't really want to help me?"

"N-no, that's not it," Lucario said, looking worried he appeared too indecisive. "Listen… I… Look, I want to help you in any way I can. That is all. I don't want to appear lazy when you're doing everything for yourself."

"Oh… Oh, right. That makes more sense," Chris said, nodding. Lucario sighed in his mind. "Thanks, then. Let's go up to the attic to get the tree."

The two went upstairs to the second floor, where they headed to the northeast corner to a new set of stairs leading up to the attic above. As they went up, the light of day started to dim, the smell in the air getting duller than the other two floors. A wooden door hatch stopped them in their way up that Chris unlocked by pulling an iron piece on the edge, pushing the hatch up where it fell on the attic's floor. Once making it to the top of the stairs, Lucario was greeted by a darker atmosphere in a large flat room with dozens of boxes, either laid flat or stacked on top of each other. The ceiling above was less pleasing to look at, due to the fact the attic was ruled by a wooden setting mostly covered in dust and some spider webs in the darkest of corners.

"Boxes…" Lucario muttered, looking at the wide variety of boxes around. Many of said boxes had words written with permanent marker. Some of the words he could make out were "Mexican decorations," "graduation clothes," "old computer devices," "family photos," "vacation photos," and "family vacation photos." "… This place is rather dirty."

"I know," Chris said. "That's why I've given up on cleaning this place unless it gets very, very dirty. Thankfully, it's… almost time for me to wipe the dust." He sighed.

Lucario lamented the fact that aura was not really that good at seeing inside objects when the inside lacked aura waves he could pick up. Whatever was inside a box, it was shrouded in mystery until opened. He took notice of the many boxes, wondering which one the

Christmas tree was in. "So where is the Christmas tree?" Lucario asked.

"Easy. It's this box right next to the stairs," Chris said.

They both looked at a tall white box that was about 5 feet tall and 2 feet wide, standing idly against the wooden wall. Sure enough, the box had a picture of a fake pine tree and several other words that all basically spelled "Christmas tree" several times.

"I was imagining a much larger tree…" Lucario said, somewhat disappointed he towered over the box.

"It's not that big, though. The pieces are all scattered inside with a base and a large pole that can be retracted," Chris explained. "The problem is… this box is heavy. My plan was to take down the pieces one by one. Usually, in previous years, I have some relatives come over and help me take it down and decorate it."

"Step aside."

"Wait, what?" Chris asked, suddenly noticing Lucario had gotten closer to the box. The Aura Pokémon knelt down next to it and wrapped his right arm a bit short on halfway around the width of the box. The teen moved back several steps away, until he said, "A-are you going t-?!"

" ***HMPH!*** " Lucario used his other hand to tilt the box towards his right arm, reclining it enough for him to let it dangle against it. So very casually, Lucario held the box in place on his arm and stood back up, the heavy white box perfectly still, turning around towards Chris. Inside the box, the parts of the Christmas tree rattled, though thankfully it was very hard to break plastic even by a sudden lift from the floor. "I'm ready."

The teen was more than a little impressed by the Herculean strength of the towering Lucario, holding the box like it was nothing slowing

him down any. Lucario exhibited no signs of struggle; not even gritting his fangs. The white box may as well had been invisible.

However, more importantly, was how Lucario looked rather heroic in Chris's eyes, even if it was just a box he was carrying over his lithe-looking right arm. Immediately, Chris's mind played out a rather bizarre scenario, inspired by the event unfolding before him.

" *How do you want me to dispose of this box?* " the Lucario in his head asked.

" ***Yes,*** " the Chris in his head said, in a deep voice.

" *An astute choice,* " the Lucario said nodding, and the box blew up, for no real reason.

"Chris," the Lucario in the impossible reality called out to him.

Chris, somewhat startled, shook his head. "U-uh, what?" he asked.

"You were… uh… spacing out for a bit," Lucario pointed out. "You were staring at me without saying anything. What is wrong?"

The teen could only blush as a visual response. As for a vocal one… "I-I kind of got too impressed seeing you carrying that box like nothing. S-sorry. I'm still easily impressed whenever I see you lifting heavy stuff up or using your… incredible strength," he explained.

"…" Lucario looked at the box, being actually easier to carry than the time he had lifted Chris's bed that one time before. Puzzled that Chris thought the box was heavier, Lucario couldn't ignore the part when the teen said he was easily impressed by his feats of strength. Subconsciously, Lucario preened a little, and very much obviously showed off his strength by twisting his body to the sides, the box at his mercy. "Oh, it's nothing to me. I've lifted heavier with your bed," Lucario said, unable to hide a small smile. Although Chris didn't look impressed, his flaring aura burst with waves of happiness Lucario picked up that told a different, more honest story. Mentally, Lucario

chuckled. His inner Riolu, meanwhile, put up a tough look again and flexed his little arms.

"Y-yes, I see that. Please stop using that box like a weight," Chris said, prompting Lucario to stop. "A-anyway, I need you to take that box down to the first floor. We'll set up the tree there… Oh, wait!" He went to the other side of the attic towards a stack of five boxes. He eyed one of them that read "Christmas tree decorations" that was roughly large but not so much for him to carry for himself. The problem was, the box was the second-to-last box going up. "I need to pick this box. It's got the lights and plastic spheres to put on the tree. Let me just grab it… and make sure the box on top doesn't fall on me…"

As Chris set out to retrieve the box, Lucario was just about to move downstairs until a sharp pang rang in his head. He grunted, putting his free hand on his forehead, as his mind fell into some kind of deep focus…

The pang he experienced was no strange feeling, however. Truth be told, the Aura Pokémon had experienced several pangs before. Notably, when it was time for him to learn Aura Sphere, the same pang - the first of a few ones - ran through his head as he sorted out his thoughts… or rather, his move set, in his subconscious. His mind had played out how he was about to learn Aura Sphere, which he agreed to, while discarding his Counter move while leaving Swords Dance, Bone Rush, and Force Palm intact.

Though, after that, during his meditation sessions and some house chores he helped Chris with, the pangs manifested at least two more times throughout the months. The second one, having occurred during meditation, involved a mental picture of him rushing towards a target and delivering a devastating series of punches and kicks that, afterwards, left him panting heavily, his body shooting out steam. It was the Close Combat move that was coming to mind, which he agreed to learning by discarding Bone Rush. He was going to tell Chris about the new move, but due to an event involving eating pizza for the first time, Lucario completely forgot.

The third time occurred while he was moping the floor with a wet mop on the first floor. Back then, his mind played out a visual representation of him pulling back his hands before holding them out together in front of him, launching a purple and red beam into a target. That time, it was Dragon Pulse, though he declined to learn it, just because he feared launching that move by accident while at the house… and there was no way he would fix a huge hole in the wall. Ever.

As for now, the fourth pang that rang in his head…

"SPIDER!"

While still deciding what to do, Lucario, startled, turned towards where Chris was, seeing him pulling back from the box he was grasping after spotting a small brown spider hanging from a thin spider web thread from the ceiling, almost touching his face, panicking him. Though he did well in getting away, there was no denying the fact he clumsily pulled the box too quickly, stumbling back on the floor…

Causing the stack of boxes to fall on him.

…

…

…

Time seemed to run much slower before Chris actually fell on the floor, alongside the boxes threatening to injure him. From where Lucario was, he instinctively let his body move on his own and dashed towards Chris, although not in a way considered to be normal. At a normal pace time ran, Lucario quite literally became a large blur of blue that sliced through the air, left a clean trail cutting through the dust on the floor, and removed Chris from the direction of the falling boxes before they completely reached him, falling down

on the floor and making a bit of a mess with several items coming out from some of the unsealed boxes.

And all this had happened in a fourth of a second, right between Lucario moving and before he was seen carrying Chris on his arms next to the fallen boxes, knelt down and clutching the human close in a protective stance.

"You're fine," Lucario growled under his breath, the adrenaline of his blinding speed wearing out.

The abrupt change all around Chris had shaken him a bit, mostly because his mind was still catching up to the present, until he finally came to and gasped when he found himself being held on Lucario's arms. His eyes darted around, and he spotted the boxes that almost fell on him, realizing he should have been buried under them… which was an impossibility, replaced with the impossibility that was Lucario carrying him while kneeling down.

"W-what the… What in the…?!" Chris gasped out.

Compared to him, Lucario didn't look any worse for wear. "It's fine," he said. "I saw those boxes about to fall on you, so I simply ran and took you away from them."

"B-but…" Chris looked towards where Lucario was holding the Christmas tree box, now lying down on the floor next to the exit to the second floor. The discrepancy was evident to Chris. The two were standing away approximately forty feet away from each other, nothing blocking the way. Logically, Lucario was simply too far away to even set down the box in time to grab Chris at the same time… and yet, the straight trail cutting through the dust on the floor left Chris speechless.

"…" Lucario looked at the direction Chris was looking at and finally understood, his mouth gawking. "What the…?"

"W-wait, you don't know what just happened?" Chris asked, his focus coming back to him.

"I-I… Well, like I said, I saw those boxes about to fall on you, so I ran to save you."

"We were too far away from each other for you to just reach me out!" Chris pointed out. "Plus, you would have been standing right behind me to even react in time, but that'd only mean you predicted the boxes would fall on me prior you saw it happen! And yet you say you ran?"

"T-that's what happened!" Lucario said, standing up and still carrying Chris. "I-I mean, why don't I show you so you believe me?" He turned to face the opposite direction of the attic.

"Oh, please, like you're trying to tell me you ran at the speed of light or som-"

A quarter of a second passed before Chris's body registered a gust of wind that had brushed his skin. Moreover, his eyes looked to his right, and he yelped when he saw more stacks of boxes that were placed on the far side from where they were… that were a few feet away from his position. Gawking in utter disbelief, he looked up at Lucario, who appeared completely unfazed, at least until he himself noticed what had happened again, leading to more gawking. They looked behind, where a second clean trail cleaving through the dust was left, leading all the way back from where Lucario had been standing on the far side where the fallen boxes were.

"Holy… ***CRAP!*** " Chris yelped, holding his chest from his beating heart.

"I… I…" Lucario stammered, stepping back some.

"That… that was… Wow!" Chris looked at both trails splitting the dust, and then back at Lucario. "You… you really DID run at the speed of light! Holy CRAP!"

"I… I did?" Lucario said.

"W-well, duh! M-maybe not that fast, but… Holy CRAP!"

"Y-you keep saying those words."

"Because this was… Holy CRAP!" Chris held his head, unable to keep his excitement in check.

Lucario sighed, setting the shocked but surprised Chris down on his feet. The jackal looked down at his feet, seeing no drastic changes to them, even as he inspected his pink paw-pads and wiggled his toes. "I seriously don't remember being able to run that fast before… not even when I left the house and went to your school," Lucario said.

"S-seriously?" Chris asked. "Then how were you able to pull this off?"

"W-well…" Lucario pinched his chin in deep thought. "… Wait…" He recalled the pang. "Chris, I have to tell you something first… Actually, there is something that had happened to me several times starting when I first learned Aura Sphere."

"Wait, what?"

And so, Lucario explained Chris the pangs he had gone through in previous occasions and how they all were related to him learning a new move that he had to choose to accept or discard from his list of moves.

At the end of the explanation, Chris rested his left check on his left palm in thought. "Is this… how Pokémon learn new moves, then? They get this sharp pain in their heads and they decide to learn or discard new moves? But then how do the trainers in the game even know what's happening?" he wondered.

Lucario could only shrug. "I have no idea… My memories of my past before arriving here are hazy, other than recalling where I was supposedly training with my trainer," he said.

Chris grunted, putting his palm down. "Oh, all these juicy bits of exposition and no way to ever find out what it all means in the bigger picture…" he lamented, slouching a bit. "So then…" he straightened up, "you learned Aura Sphere, then learned Close Combat and discard… Dragon Pulse apparently, and now… Extreme Speed!

"Extreme Speed?" Lucario repeated.

"Y-yes! That's it! That blinding speed you ran was definitely Extreme Speed!" Chris said, but then, he grimaced. "Wait, how is it that you sound doubtful?"

The jackal scratched his head. "I… well, to be honestly fair, I didn't know *exactly* the names of my moves other than Aura Sphere and whatever else is etched in my mind," Lucario explained. "… No, wait. Aura Sphere was also alien to me. I simply guessed right it was called that only through appearances."

"… Wow," Chris said, looking away. "This… wow."

"What is it?"

"If… what you're saying about not knowing the names of your moves is true… what could this mean to the logic of your world?" The teen asked, giving Lucario a quizzical look. "Is it possible Pokémon can go their whole lives using moves without ever knowing the names?"

Lucario shook his head. "It's… an interesting thought, really, but I can't tell. I'm sadly unreliable in the ways of how things work in my universe," he said. Chris expressed disappointment in his saddened look. "U-um, I wish I really knew better to explain it to you. You, um, seem very interested in all this…"

The teen then smiled, eyes hinting at some lingering disappointment. "I got very interested, didn't I? Sorry. It was a bit fun to find the logic in this phenomenon. Turns out making up theories can be rather entertaining," he giggled. "Don't feel bad. I feel like we made a breakthrough by ourselves! Even if we didn't get quite there."

The Aura Pokémon smiled, nodding. "Yes… I admit this was enlightening in some way," he said, looking at his right hand as he fondly recalled when he learned Aura Sphere time ago. On that note, he had to admit that trying to find out the mysteries of learning moves with Chris helping gave him some good vibes in him, as shown by his inner Riolu playfully looking around and pretending he was entering some ruins in dire need of exploring.

"Anyway. Back to what just happened a moment ago," Chris began, "you must have learned Extreme Speed. What move did you discard over it?"

Lucario thought for a moment. "I discard Swords Dance over it," he said. "Now I have Aura Sphere, Force Palm, Extreme Speed, and Close Combat."

"Goodness. You really like the offensive…"

"It's a rush I enjoy," Lucario said, sounding like he was showing off.

"S-sure… But before I forget… You're so amazing!" Chris gushed, his hands interlanced, startling Lucario, who wasn't honestly expecting such a reaction despite the fact he really was showing off his move set. "Super strength, super speed, the ability to talk through your mouth and your mind, the ability to sense auras and borrow senses from others without suspicion… What *can't* you do?"

The Aura Pokémon could only blush, his wagging tail going unnoticed by him and Chris himself. His inner Riolu was hopping around, barking, his tail wagging rather ferociously after hearing those praises from the teen. Praises like those, of course, weren't enough for the inner child, wanting to hear even more to feel even

more truly appreciated. "W-well… it… would be nice to… fly, I guess?" Lucario said, a bit unsure at first, but then he wondered if he could pull it off. Maybe he could weaponize his aura to let him fly using explosive bursts from his hands and feet.

"Oh, I don't doubt you can do that somehow if only we had the means to find out," Chris said. The inner Riolu was now rolling on the floor, giggling. "Thinking back, when you swooped in and saved from those boxes… you looked like a super hero for a moment."

"A… super hero?" Lucario repeated, his mind really attaching to those words. The inner Riolu stood straight up, petite hands on his hips, roaring.

Chris blushed when realizing what he had said. "U-um, well, not that you don't look like one when not pulling those heroics…"

"…"

Lucario's body suddenly flared up with aura for about a second, making Chris gasp and back off. "O-oh crap. Did I make you angry or something?" Chris asked. "T-that must have sounded harsh. I-I'm sorry."

"N-no. No. On the contrary, I…" Lucario smiled, "I… felt a bit too happy that my aura got overwhelmed with all these… all these happy feelings in me. You're being too nice to me more than usual, so…" He averted his eyes from the surprised human. "… So… yes… Thank you." He had muttered the last part, though not quietly enough for Chris to miss.

Chris, also looking away with a smile and his cheeks red, tried his best to drop the subject, thinking that it was probably too much to dwell on any longer. Although he was just as happy with himself as Lucario felt, it was perhaps to the best that both of them regained their focus in the attic. "You're welcome… my super hero?" The teen gasped, turning his back to Lucario, who swung his face towards him with shock. "A-anyway! Would you be so kind and bring the

Christmas tree box down to the second floor? It's better to put it there where we have more space. P-plus, it'd look nice next to the terrace doors. I-I'm going to go get the decorations from the box I was trying to get." He awkwardly and hurriedly went to the other side of the attic to retrieve the box lying down around the scattered boxes that tried to bury him.

The Aura Pokémon watched the human walking fast, unable to forget the words "my super hero" from his head. Certainly a very good description other than saying "my Lucario" or something, Lucario thought. He chuckled to himself, satisfied that Chris thought even more highly of him thanks to his heroic act. As he went over to the box he let go prior flashing from one side of the attic to the other, in his head, he fondly thought, "(I am Chris's super hero.)" He waited for Chris to come to him, noticing the rather embarrassed smile the teen failed to completely take off from his face, and led the way down the attic with the box he so heroically carried down.

Chris did come back to clean the mess of boxes with Lucario's help. Once having finished that, after Chris started to leave, Lucario sensed the aura of that one spider that had scared Chris and caused the incident, locating it by his feet by coincidence. Growling and baring his fangs, Lucario raised his left foot and stomped the pathetic bug to death, twisting his foot on it for good measure. Proud of felling the evil bug, Lucario chuckled, and promptly followed the unaware Chris down to the second floor. His inner Riolu roared, proud of saving Chris from the monster.

Lucario groaned when he realized he had gotten some of the spider's inner bits stuck on his foot, sticking to his paw pads. One outing to the bathroom's tub would fix the spider's last act of revenge.

Days later…

The 25th of December dawned on their home, despite it being cloudy with a chance of snowing outside.

On the second floor, Lucario sat on the couch, taking a sip of hot chocolate from a coffee mug, looking up at a decorated Christmas tree positioned in the middle of the floor.

The tree was truly so much different than when he had remembered when he had opened the white box. In its "natural" state, it was a bunch of fake branches of iron with plastic green rectangular leaves of innumerable numbers and a four-pronged base with a tall stick of dark green plastic. In its full form, it did appear to be a pine tree that hid a dark secret within its leaves that certainly lacked the essence of life, as the aura expert in the home attested.

In its full glory, it was impressive. Trails of blinking lights spiraling upwards around the tree, hanging spheres of different colors that reflected the world in distorted shapes, candy canes hanging from the tip of several branches and placed far apart, and a large white star at the very tip that, as Lucario remembered, was the very last part they did and he remembered fondly, as the tree was 9 feet tall and barely out of his arm's reach. Though Chris was going to get a ladder to get to the top, Lucario used his strength to hold Chris up by his waist so he could place the star at a straight angle.

Lucario had been so proud of finishing the decoration, holding the human up, that they held that position for half a minute until he came to when Chris looked down at him and asked, "U-um, you can put me down now." It was embarrassing at first, but Lucario telling smile said he liked it, and Chris's aura had spiked with exciting feelings he couldn't help picking up, especially at close proximity.

Back in the present, Lucario turned his attention down under the tree's branches, where a Christmas rug covered the base around the tree, with a dozen of attention-grabbing boxes of different colors, different-colored wrappers, and ribbons of all sizes. The gifts had been delivered to home by Chris's parents, who had tried to actually get back home but, as Chris expected, failed, but not because of work, but because they had picked a bad time to take a flight to Los Angeles all the way from New York where a snowstorm had canceled all flights since three days ago, effectively putting a stop to

the promise. Unlike last time, at least Chris was much less impulsive by not reacting so harshly on them. That gave Lucario a big sigh of relief.

All things considered, when he had embraced Chris with an arm, Chris embraced him from the side and thanked him for the vote of support.

The door to the bathroom on the second floor opened and Chris came out from the steamy room, having taken a shower before opening the gifts. Wearing a red sweater and white sweatpants, he neared the tree where Lucario was taking a sip of his hot chocolate. Lucario had to admit that it was refreshing to taste chocolate at a high temperature during a cold season, especially when sitting on the couch. "Done taking a shower. Time for the best part of the day!" Chris said, sitting on his knees close to Lucario, reaching out for the gifts.

Like Lucario remembered, Christmas Day was apparently a special day celebrating the birth of "a special person" Chris told him, though the teen decided not to elaborate much on that to Lucario to prevent him from getting too much into religious inquiries. With that in mind, people around the world prepared for the holiday by buying presents to family and friends, in what looked like a second birthday that was shared with everyone without question (except certain groups that, again, Chris did not want to explain much about).

Of course, at least people had the advantage of going out and buy gifts for others; something Lucario realized early in the tale regarding his unfortunate shut-in situation that prevented him from seeking a gift for Chris… and the fact he was basically moneyless. He lamented not being able to secure a gift for the human, especially when the act of giving was better than receiving.

And speaking of receiving, a gift wrapped in blue with black ribbons was now sitting on his lap, snapping him out from his long stare at Chris opening gifts. The truth was the gift was put on his lap before Chris even tried to open a gift himself. "What the…? Lucario stared

down at the present. A sticker with a tag on the top read, "From: Chris" and "To: Lucario."

"It's for you," Chris said, smiling. "I… bought that for you two weeks ago." He blushed, looking away.

"So this is…" Lucario had recalled a few weeks earlier how Chris had gotten home with several items to put into presents. That time was also when Lucario was taught how to wrap up presents himself, and Chris had to admit that, for having large hands and three large, stubby fingers, Lucario was very adept with delicate tasks. Using a fork had been a preview of what Lucario could do if he put his mind into it.

The question now was how Chris managed to sneak in wrapping up the gift Lucario hadn't seen before.

"I wrapped that up one day while you were taking shower," Chris said, chuckling. "It was the best time for me to get to work and put it down under the tree without you noticing."

Lucario, satisfied, chuckled. "You're one sneaky person, trying to get past my aura senses," he said.

"It's not like you have your senses on all the time. Open it!"

The Aura Pokémon started to tear the wrapping apart rather easily - disappointed that the present didn't give him a challenge - until he left it bare as a normal box with tape sealing the top. Looking at the spikes on his wrists, Lucario found them a use and tore the tape in two, opening the top of the box and looking inside at a red item he grasped in his hand and pulled it out.

It was a long, fluffy red scarf that remained connected to the box even though he had pulled it out a bit. His mouth hung open a bit, curiously running a hand on the fabric, feeling its inviting softness. Pulling it out more, he discovered the tail end of the scarf had his

name stitched in blue with a black outline; the word in the same soft fabric as the rest of the scarf.

"A scarf?" Lucario said. "With… my name on it?"

"M-Merry Christmas!" Chris awkwardly said, even with open palms. "I had that scarf customized by an online retailer and had it done like that for you. Mind you, it was hard to think of a present for you. I was thinking of gym equipment, but with the strength you have, it'd be very redundant. And if I ordered the big stuff… that'd raise a lot of eyebrows in my family…" As he saw Lucario stare at the shape of the scarf, worry settled in. "Do… you like it?"

Lucario blinked, realizing he was probably staring at his gift blankly for too long. Like he had seen others wear scarves, he took out the scarf from the box and wrapped it around his furred neck until it was all neatly wrapped under his head, with the tail end with his name hanging to the right of his chest spike. He got up and walked to a mirror hanging on the wall to the right of the hallway leading to the bathroom, seeing his reflection.

A grin formed in his lips as he admired his look. The red scarf, to him, complemented his blue looks well. He twisted his body a bit, unaware that he was posing for the mirror by putting his left hand on his hip. In his head, somehow, the inner Riolu had a similar scarf, except with "Riolu" written on the tail end. He pushed the fabric to his chin, tail wagging furiously, gushing with delight.

Seeing Lucario doing that in front of the mirror, Chris blinked. "(Wow. I never took him for a model,)" he thought.

"It's great," Lucario said, before turning back to Chris. "I don't feel the cold much, but I like how it looks… and how it feels." Like his inner Riolu did, he pushed the fabric up to his chin. If it hadn't been a scarf, it would have been a thin but comfy blanket. The grunt he made sounded pleased.

Relieved, Chris smiled anew. "Oh, that's a relief! I'm so glad you like it!" he said. "I really thought it wasn't going to be good enough for you…"

"It came from you. It's more than enough."

"O-oh…"

Lucario opened his shocked eyes and looked away, unaware that his chin was still engulfed by the scarf he was pushing up. Chris, for his part, looked away as well, both embarrassed.

"… Um… thank you," Lucario said, breaking the silence, eyes still drifting away. "I just… I just wished I could've gotten you a gift for Christmas…" He let go of the scarf, looking guilty at Chris, who looked back towards his direction with worry in his expression. "I feel so ashamed, Chris. You've given me so much ever since I got to this world, but there's no way for me to repay you back during Christmas, at least with a present… and this is supposed to be a huge day for humans." He clutched the tail end of his scarf with both hands as he looked down at his feet. "Please… forgive me. You… you mean a lot to me, and yet I came up short today. It's inexcusable…"

The teen stood up from the floor and walked to Lucario, standing in front of him. Lucario just barely missed seeing Chris wiping a few tears away with his arm, though Chris's eyes were a bit red, as if telling he was trying hard to suppress more tears from leaking. "D-don't be silly," Chris said, almost choking up. "I knew you wouldn't be able to get me a gift for Christmas, but I didn't blame you one bit, you know…"

"You… didn't?" Lucario asked.

"I understood that when I was getting you that scarf," Chris said. "I knew getting a gift from you was impossible because you can't go out of here. I always… always feel guilty you're forced to be a shut-in so no one tries to take you away from here… from… me…" he muttered the last part, forcing a twitching smile. "But then… I feel

guilty myself, y-you know? Guilty that having you here makes me happy, which makes me feel so selfish, trying to take advantage of you just because I think… I think you're amazing…"

The Aura Pokémon's heart ached seeing the teen unable to stop the tears from coming. He was moved by Chris's words, never once believing the human was being selfish. Lucario didn't even use his aura to make sure Chris was telling the truth. Somehow, Lucario felt like he adopted an alleged seventh sense on top of his obvious sixth sense; the sense of accurately guessing a person's character. Perhaps the sense was developed in secret thanks to Chris's nurturing. Perhaps it had been dormant in Lucario's psyche for a long while now. Perhaps it was a combination of the previous two points that brought it forth.

And right now, seeing the human bury his face on his hands prompted Lucario to pull Chris to his side and embrace him, resting his chin on Chris's hair. "Right now," Lucario began as Chris noticed what was going on, "what do you wish me to give you for Christmas?"

Chris sobbed quietly, removing his hands from his face and hugging the tall Pokémon for comfort. "I-I don't know…" Chris lamented. "I can't just say anything…"

"Very well. Anything it is."

Chris could only blink, utterly confused. "B-but… you can't…"

"If it was up to me, I'd get you *anything*, Chris." As Lucario embraced Chris tighter, his aura manifested, his head appendages floating up, crimson eyes turning yellow, completely engulfing the two like a large torch that wouldn't burn them into ashes, lighting up the second floor. Somehow, Chris felt a warming feeling that felt familiar. The familiar feeling heavily resembled… or was the same feeling he felt back when Lucario had accidentally intertwined their auras back when Lucario had learned Aura Sphere. His own aura was brought out into the open, mixing together with Lucario's powerful own. Unlike last

time, Lucario was not going to let it vanish, as he felt incredible emotional power. "I know it's impossible right now. I know my own limitations in this world. I know there is so much I could do if the world would be ready to accept me. But… I also know there is no way I'll rest easy knowing you're ashamed for thinking you're taking advantage of me. Hell, I could say the same thing, don't you think? Like I said before, you've given me so much it looks like *I'm* the one taking advantage of you, not the other way around."

"B-but…" Chris sobbed, his aura welling up with negative feelings of sadness. "But that's not true…"

"Exactly." Lucario's powerful aura soothed Chris's aura, suppressing the negative feelings slowly. At that point, Lucario shut his eyes, tears leaking. "I guess… my gift to you for Christmas is… my fervent desire to be by your side when you feel down, because my day is not complete until I make *damn* sure you had a great day."

"… I-I don't…" Chris sniffed, "I don't think… that's good for you. It makes me look more selfish…"

Lucario chuckled. "Chris, please. After all we've gone through, was there ever a time you gained more than I did? The way I saw it, we both benefitted equally. Incredibly enough, while you enjoy my company, I get even stronger, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally. Every day is gift for the two of us I don't wish to end… which, let me tell you…" he growled, embracing arms holding Chris in a protective stance, "no one will be able to stop, *no one* . If anyone *dares* to threaten our way of living… our happiness… I'll tear them apart, limb by limb, bone by bone. That I promise you."

After listening to Lucario's words and feeling their auras mingling in harmony, Chris was frozen in place, trying to understand the feelings behind those words.

Thinking he may gone overboard at the last part, Lucario stuttered. "… Uh… perhaps I sounded a bit violent near the end, but… you… get what I mean. Sorry. I got carried away…" Lucario apologized.

"… Lucario…" Chris muttered.

"… Yes?"

"…" Chris giggled, his face leaning into Lucario's chest. "You're… you're pretty good at giving Christmas gifts with words alone…"

The Aura Pokémon grimaced. "That, uh, was not the point… I got so lost…" He sensed Chris's aura sparking with positive feelings of happiness that he received in full with his senses on overdrive. "Chris… your aura… it's… it's radiating with positive energy."

"I-is it? Well… that's because I'm obviously happy, then… But seriously…" Chris hugged Lucario tighter. "… Hearing you say all that is such an invaluable Christmas gift only you could come up with. And all I gave you was a scarf…"

Lucario gasped, opening his glowing eyes. "Wait, no! This scarf is incredible! D-don't think I don't think it's bad or anything! If you want, I can wear it all summer, even!" he said, panicking, his aura turning into a wild panicked flame.

Though hearing Chris laugh calmed Lucario down as the teen looked up to him, tears avoiding the smile on his face. "It's fine. It's fine! Seriously, you're even more amazing than I thought you were!" Chris expressed happily. "To think… to think you'd go to great lengths for me… even for a Christmas gift…" He sobbed again. "… You don't need to give me a gift, Lucario, at least not after hearing you say all that… You clearly would do it."

"… Well… of course," Lucario said, smiling down at him. "… Is this… the part where I say…?"

Chris nodded.

"… Merry Christmas, Chris." Lucario chuckled, the teen leaning his face next to the chest spike. Lucario, growling, embraced Chris more, their mixed auras shining bright thanks to their combined

happy feelings they used for comfort. "… It's funny. Your name almost sounds like Christmas."

"Is… my name good?" Chris asked.

"The best."

"You're so sweet, Lucario…"

"I know… You know why? Because you said so, and you only say the truth."

"Well… in that case, you're so strong."

"What else…?"

"And big."

"Come on. Don't leave me hanging."

" *Very* big?"

"Grrr. You're holding back."

"And very smart!"

"Damn it, Chris, I want MORE! Say it like it is!"

"You can totally make Mt. Everest your lifting weight!"

"Child's play! Stop undermining my true strength!"

"O-okay! You can kick the moon out of the solar system!"

"Dial it back, because your words are making my gift look unimpressive… even if the moon is just waiting for me to kick it out. Maybe I can grow gigantic and you could hitch a ride on my shoulder to watch the show… but if so, at that size, I'd be even stronger that I could rule the galaxy… Hmm…"

"Lucario!"

Their laughs filled the room as they kept embracing each other, their spirits high. Outside, it started to snow, which they noticed from their position. Thinking that it was a good sign, Lucario made their auras fade away before they went to the doors of the terrace and looked up into the cloudy sky to see the snowy particles falling down softly onto the ground around the neighborhood. To Lucario, it was the first time he saw snow, all the previous days of December being just chilly without a sign of snow. Wordlessly, he pulled Chris to his side by his left shoulder, the teen being a bit surprised until the side glance the smiling Lucario gave him made him smile back and slip his right arm behind Lucario's high shoulders. They watched the snow fall, until soon it would all turn into a winter wonderland by noon. Chris would leave later to celebrate Christmas with his relatives to get more gifts, leaving Lucario alone in the house. Lucario, however, was fine with it, because he would simply use his aura senses to accompany Chris in soul. Literally. He was never going to leave Chris's side…

Except for the times Chris went to the bathroom, that is.

Meanwhile, the inner Riolu barked nonstop, happy that his older self had done so much for the troubled human. True to the season, Christmas was a magical time, when the act of giving was far more important than receiving… though, in this case, Lucario thought that what he gave to Chris, and what Chris gave to him, made the act of receiving all the more enjoyable, only because giving was the trigger.

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Soon, it would be New Year's eve… a day that would bring one final challenge only Lucario could take and overcome that would shape his future, whether that future would have Chris or not…

Originally, in the making of this chapter, Chris's parents were going to show up during Christmas, but I scrapped that because the story is almost finished at this point. Bringing them in now would prolong things further that I'd want, and I'm not open to the shenanigans of stuffing Lucario in a closet for hiding every day.

Well! As implied in the narration and here, the story is almost reaching its end. Although the answer is probably obvious, I believe it's important to show ***how*** *the answer was reached in the first place, just like trying to avoid making the point moot if you just wrote down the answer to a hard math question without bothering to use the right steps to get there. Only two chapters remain! Don't think too hard why we're ending things on number 19. It just happened.*

… I'm disturbed this ended up longer than the previous chapter… Oh well. Passion makes miracles.

Please do review, and make sure it's not entirely about asking things not related to this story. It's rather depressing to come back here and see "reviews" of that kind pop up.